

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: WILL IT EVER BE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE?

Ruth Lewis, Women's Sports Foundation, NE, **Fiona Patterson**, English Federation of Disability Sport, North East, **Tony Hanson and Maria Stella**, Black and Ethnic Community Organisation Network & **Jessica Lindohf**, Sport Scotland.

Context

Despite the success of sportspeople like Tanni Grey-Thompson, Kelly Holmes and Amir Khan, inequalities in UK sports still exist. Groups such as people with disabilities, women and girls, and black and ethnic minority people have lower participation rates than others, fewer role models to inspire younger generations, and are under-represented in decision-making and leadership. These inequalities contribute to the low life-chances amongst these groups, which already experience some of the poorest health and least wealth.

Discussion

To remedy these inequalities and to achieve more equitable participation rates, sport must be *delivered* differently. For this to happen, the *culture* of sport will have to change so that it is no longer associated predominantly with non-disabled, white, heterosexual men.

In the UK government targets about increasing and widening participation provide a valuable driver for such progress towards more equitable sport and physical activity. The development of the Equality Standard provides a tool to implement this progress both in terms of the delivery of sport and organisational culture. However, the path to progress is neither linear, nor free of obstacles.

The authors reflect on their experiences as sports equity managers to highlight the enduring obstacles to change, proven strategies for success, and recommendations about future approaches to sport equity.

Their vision is of a culture in which equitable ways of working are commonplace, and members of groups which have historically been marginalised (because of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, age or disability) can take their rightful places as community and elite-level athletes, coaches, leaders and decision-makers.

Main contact: Ruth Lewis, Regional Development Manager, Women's Sports Foundation (NE), c/o Sport England, Durham +44 191 384 9595 mob: 07 900 800 668 r.lewis@wsf.org.uk