

Football Unites, Racism Divides

Annual Review 2020

Football Unites Racism Divides (FURD) is a youth and social inclusion project and charity based in Sheffield, England, which works locally, nationally and internationally to combat racism and increase understanding between different communities.

Foreword

The past year has seen FURD continuing to work hard with regard to our overall aim of supporting the most vulnerable alongside the broader community; connecting people from all backgrounds to create an increased understanding, and true sense of belonging.

When Covid hit in March we were forced into lockdown; we had to adapt the way we delivered our work quite drastically, developing creative solutions to carry on delivering services to our most vulnerable clients. Whatever the coming year brings, FURD will adapt to the needs of its young people and communities accordingly. Despite the difficulties of this year we have gained additional funding which is crucial in enabling our work with young people around pathways to employment and volunteering. Our priority is always to have a positive impact on the lives and experiences of the young people and vulnerable adults that we work with through the programmes we deliver. Increasing their sense of self-worth, building confidence, and ensuring they have opportunities to challenge, speak out, and make positive life choices, are central to the work we do.

Looking forward in 2021 we will continue to build on the strength of our social connections. Our capacity and ability to build connections between communities will continue to be fundamental in the coming year. With our members we will continue to advocate for this vital work, and the essential role it plays in building a more equal, inclusive and fair Britain.

We would like to thank to all those who have worked for and with us. I hope people will continue to benefit from our continued efforts.

From all of the FURD team we wish you all a better 2021.

Mehrun Ahmed and Simon Hyacinth, FURD Co-Chief Executive Officers



The U-Mix Centre

Our home, the U-Mix youth and community centre was built and named to encourage people to mix – yet in 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic prevented people from mixing. The coronavirus restrictions meant the Centre was closed from March to September and again in November, staff were wholly or partly furloughed, and we were unable to hold any large events like tournaments or festivals.

On reopening, to aid social distancing, we took the middle one of our 3G football pitches out of use. The remaining pitches have been in high demand particularly during evenings and weekends. With so many opportunities to so-

cialise and keep fit being taken away during the pandemic, football, when restrictions allowed it, became even more important to and valued by players.

The centre has been quiet inside, as the imposition of strict limits on group size made many groups impossible or uneconomical to operate. However, we have had some indoor and outdoor FURD and partner sessions taking place, including the Inclusion School, Roshni, Belonging Group, Minds Over Football, walking football, several FURD football sessions and some use of the dance studio.

In the meantime, we have continued to provide a service to our most vulnerable clients, including the mental health carers group. We have remained in touch with many of our clients via text and phone calls. On Wednesdays we've been running a food bank from the U-Mix Centre as many of them are struggling without basic food items such as cereals and pasta.

We've been consulting with young people on what they would like in terms of youth sessions at the centre, as all of FURD's centre based youth work has stopped due to the pandemic. Once infection rates come down to safer levels we will aim to reopen, up two nights a week, with two new sessional youth workers.

Activities for young people

Where Covid-19 restrictions have allowed, we have continued to deliver on our BBC Children in Need funded weekly football sessions for young people from 6 years upwards. In 'normal' times, these sessions would take place 6 days a week, outside of school, at the U-Mix Centre. We engage with young people from some of the most deprived areas and communities of Sheffield. The U-Mix Centre sits in Lowfield Park, a stone's throw from Sheffield United Football Club and adjacent to areas of significantly high 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' (BAME) youth populations; where poverty and disadvantage is high and educational attainment and employment opportunities low. Our football sessions are delivered by qualified coaching staff and aim to build and improve skills, increase self-confidence and self-esteem, and facilitate positive interactions amongst participants. Alongside this, we also run weekly youth club and music sessions.

Our coaches can recommend talented players to local professional clubs. In 2020, schoolboy Lamine Sidibe signed for Sheffield United after being recommended by FURD coaches. He has attended our training sessions since 2019.

Covid-19 hit young people, and our ability to work with them, extremely hard in 2020. Two lockdowns, heavy restrictions in group/sporting activities and social distancing has meant spending much of our time grappling with finding new and safe ways to deliver activities and engage with our clients. This has included reduced numbers of participants at sessions, when able to run them, and/or finding new non-contact ways to deliver activities e.g. online. We've worked with local partners, e.g. Musical Works, to deliver online music sessions for young people.



Henry Smith Phoenix Project (HS)

The HS project offers individually tailored support for young people aged 16-24 to engage in projects to increase their employability skills. We have also been working on identifying educational opportunities for some individuals in order to gain academic qualifications.

With this in mind we have seen young people contact us, been referred by existing agencies or have rang in themselves to ask about ways to get involved.

Before the Covid regulations we had a steady flow of young people regularly engaging in the activities on offer at FURD/U-MIX.

In the current landscape, we have taken to working with our young people in other ways.

We have been going for walks with them around the centre, meeting at outdoor spaces such as parks, using WhatsApp and Zoom, phone talks and emails to keep engaged with young people. We have also re-configured the space within the centre to meet regulations and developed other partnership work with agencies that are supporting young people.

In addition to supporting young people in accessing employment, training and educational opportunities, creating volunteering opportunities and setting up new businesses, we have been working on personal development to cope with heightened anxiety levels. We have been offering 1-1 counselling sessions as well as 1-1 fitness programmes.

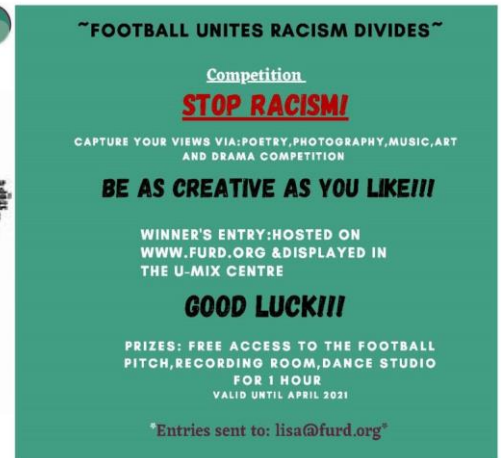
We have young people involved in creating online schools competitions (Capture...stop racism), enterprise, accessing learning institutions based online, colleges, centres for completing training courses and filling in application forms for employment after understanding what employers are looking for in this new era.

"For a while I felt nervous about where my life was going...I would just get anxious about what to do. I felt I had a lot to offer but was not sure where to go and was not sure how to apply for jobs as I thought my dyslexia would get in the way.

I'm so happy that Lisa approached me and started talking to me about me. I felt as time went on I had actions for my overall plan. We are currently applying for funding for me to get a level 2 fitness qualification. I have also created a C.V.and applied for some jobs.

I feel this support has given me a sense of direction, comfort and safety especially in the times of this pandemic!"

STOP RACISM



Resources and Information

2020 saw us launch our new website www.furd.org. The site includes new features whilst preserving twenty years of our history contained in our previous site.

The FURD-commissioned 'Britishness' film produced in 2019 is now freely available on our Youtube channel and on the new 'Films' page of our website. Also on there are 'Where Do You Belong?', a music video created by our Soundkickers music project, our Arthur Wharton Story documentary and more.

We continue to offer public access to a huge selection of resources reflecting our areas of work through our Resources and Information Centre, including our website, exhibitions, comics, research, books and films—see [Resources | FURD](#)



Hive young writers filming 'Britishness' with Lord Mayor Magid Magid. Photo by Hive South Yorkshire.

Belonging Together project

The main objective of our Big Lottery-funded Belonging Together project is to help people from BAMER communities, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, to overcome isolation and help them integrate into the community. From our experience of working with them, we realise that their needs are far more complex than just being active through football. We have five projects running as part of the Belonging Together programme with the potential to run an estimated 292 sessions a year, but 2020 had other ideas. We managed to support clients directly and through our partners during COVID-19.

Healthy Cooking and English Conversation Class

FURD's partnership with Roshni Sheffield Asian Women's Resource Centre continued into 2020 with healthy cooking classes running successfully until the end of March 2020. Ten women from the local community attended sessions, cooking various dishes and distributing to participants of other FURD projects.

Post lockdown, due to Covid restrictions, Roshni was able to convert this session into an English conversation class. The purpose of the class is to raise communication skills and confidence among women from the Asian community. On 23rd September 8 women started this class with two Roshni volunteers. Women who have attended this class in the previous years have found it to greatly increase their confidence in speaking English in day-to-day situations.

Feedback from a participant:

My Family's health (Cooking Class) 19th June to 24th July
Name: Shabana Khan

Questionnaire:

Please circle

1. The meals prepared were tasty.
☒ True ☐ Somewhat true ☐ Not true

2. I have tried these recipes at home. Yes/No
How many recipes did you try? 2

3. I enjoyed the cooking class.
☒ True ☐ Somewhat true ☐ Not true

4. I enjoyed the social aspect of attending the group.
☒ True ☐ Somewhat true ☐ Not true

5. What other benefits have you had from attending this class if any?
I enjoyed meeting others and eating together
I enjoyed information about health.

Carers Project

In November 2019 Katie Ward, MENCAP Carers' Outreach Project worker, approached FURD to explain more about the project, and to see if FURD was interested in working in partnership.

A taster ran in Contemporary Dance and Football in December 2019, and received 4 referrals to start a weekly group in January 2020.

From January to March 2020 weekly sessions took place on a Wednesday, when the group was able to engage with Roshni's women's cooking group and enjoy the lunchtime food for a small donation. This was followed by dance or football, the use of the gym and art activities from 12.30 – 3.30 pm.

FURD also had students on placement that engaged and helped out in the Carers Group.

The group engaged 7 Carers and 6 cared for adults with learning disabilities and autism from January to April 2020.

During lock down the group couldn't meet physically, but yoga and dance was offered on Zoom from May to August but only 2 carers and 2 cared for people participated.

The group was going to be arranged in October 2020, but a second lockdown happened so this was cancelled.

Workers from Sheffield Mencap and FURD made extra effort to engage the group on Zoom through Chair Aerobics

INCLUSIVE CONTEMPORARY DANCE AND FOOTBALL

The Carers Outreach Project and FURD are offering FREE Sessions for unpaid Carers and their cared for adult with a mild/moderate learning disability and or with autism

@ FURD / U-MIX CENTRE, 17 ASPLINE ROAD, S2 4UJ
1PM - 3.30 PM
EVERY WEDNESDAY
FROM 22 JANUARY 2020

- No experience necessary
- Please wear suitable loose clothing and footwear
- Free refreshments provided

For more information and to book a place, call the COPE team on 0114 2758879 email COPE@sheffieldmencap.org.uk or call FURD on 0114 2587787



and conversation. 4 carers and 2 cared for people engaged with this, as well as FURD finding a volunteer translator. Some of the carers have requested to learn basic Urdu and some of the Asian ladies wanted to increase their confidence with their English (speaking) so we have enlisted the help of long-standing FURD volunteer 'Auntie' Suriaya to help. We have been using Urdu and English Basic Bingo 1 to 10 numbers to start with. We are working towards providing digital equipment to those that don't have access to smart phones or tablets so that they can access the classes via Zoom.

Belonging group football

Football kick-started 2020 with 25 newly registered clients.

7 got their asylum during this time with us and we directly assisted 3 in the process.

2 got full time jobs and settled with their family.

1 started full time education and we assisted in the application.

16 of them have come for football sessions since we re-opened, and we have supported them by donating emergency food kits where necessary.



Women's football

Our emphasis is on making football more accessible and inclusive by providing fun, friendly, no-pressure opportunities for women whether they've played a lot, not at all or not for a long time.

Our free sessions at the U-Mix Centre from 6-7pm on Tuesdays have attracted up to 23 players a week this year with a wide range of ages, backgrounds and ability level including beginners.



Inspired to play more, some of our players formed a 5-a-side team representing FURD in a league at Goals Sheffield. Just before lockdown in March 2020 they joined a second 5-a-side league.

We also ran some women-only walking football sessions and played the first round of matches in a new national walking football league before Covid interrupted.

The group kept in touch in various ways while the centre was closed, including Whatsapp and Facebook groups.

"I love attending your sessions, they are so much fun and so welcoming too."

"I have really enjoyed almost 5 years of coming to FURD, and think it is an excellent session. Everyone has been very kind and inclusive of me as an 'oldie', and cries of 'Well done' even when I've missed the ball, have been very encouraging."

Walking football



This session is run by FURD in partnership with Shipshape Health and Well-being from 1-2pm on Tuesdays on the 3G pitch at the U-Mix Centre. The group is very diverse in age, background and ability and often includes players from our neighbours St Wilfred's Centre and other support services. The emphasis is on having a fun friendly game to boost participants' physical and mental well-being whilst meeting new people. It's also a chance to find out about other opportunities and support from FURD, Shipshape and elsewhere. When Covid restrictions allow, players are invited into the centre after the session for a free drink, snack and a chat.

Minds over Football

Our *Minds over Football* sessions target primarily adults; many of whom experience, or have experienced, low-medium level mental health problems. Covid-19 has had a significant negative impact on most of us in relation to mental health. For many of those that were already experiencing problems these will have increased substantially over the past year.

We have worked hard, and to the best of our ability, to continue with *Minds over Football* sessions during 2020; which on the odd occasion has meant sessions taking place while the U-Mix Centre (building) has been closed to users. However, continuing sessions has also at times proven to be impossible. Government lockdowns, alongside FA restrictions on grassroots and non-professional football activity, has sometimes left us with the only choice of cancelling sessions for significant periods.

This has had a very negative impact on a number of our regular attendees. When unable to run these sessions FURD staff, in particular Tahir Saleem, have maintained phone/WhatsApp contact with the group.



"For most members of the group staying in touch has proven to be a real lifeline; it provides basic emotional support, helps to keep friendship groups going and reduces their general feeling of isolation."

To find out more or to get involved, please contact us at:

www.furd.org and on social media enquiries@furd.org 0114 2587787 or 07947 337232

Football Unites, Racism Divides; The U-Mix Centre, Asline Road, Lowfield, Sheffield S2 4UJ, England