CC(3) MSE 24

Communities and Culture Committee

Inquiry into: Making the most of sporting events

Response from BME Women

Sport and Leisure for BME women

Report on demand for and provision of services within Leisure for Black and Minority Ethnic women in the Vale of Glamorgan and initiatives for improving their involvement in sport



August 2009

Race Equality First

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Introduction

Race Equality First on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council undertook a project exploring demand for and provision of services within Leisure for Black and Minority Ethnic women. The project was designed to evaluate the current situation for different groups in the Vale and to gain an insight into the personal experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic women of the Vale of Glamorgan as users of Leisure facilities.

We also wished to make recommendations for the development of initiatives for BME women in sport in order to increase their involvement.

This paper is intended as a report, giving an overview of the current provision of and demand for services within Leisure for BME women and identifying areas where improvements could be made.

Aims and Objectives

- To estimate the demand for Leisure Services amongst BME women in the Vale of Glamorgan
- To examine the current provision of the services
- To identify any barriers preventing BME women from participation
- To examine the levels of engagement of BME women in sport

Rationale

- To provide statistical and qualitative data for the Vale of Glamorgan Council
- To ascertain ways and areas of improving services within Leisure for BME women
- To make recommendations for increasing engagement of BME women in sport

Method

A questionnaire was used as the main method of data collection and this was distributed by four members of the local communities.

The survey sample consisted of 53 respondents and this included women of different ages, religious beliefs and ethnicities. Data collection was undertaken within three areas of the Vale of Glamorgan which have been identified from the Census and anecdotal knowledge as areas where BME communities are predominantly located. The areas included are Penarth, Barry and Sully.

Additionally, community consultation was arranged in order to hear the views and opinions of the BME Women living in the Vale of Glamorgan. The consultation was a focus group discussion with specific questions being asked. This was facilitated by two interpreters. Thirty participants took part in the session. The participants' ethnic backgrounds were Urdu and Bengali speaking, Muslim and Hindu background. They were of different ages. All the participants were residents of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Background to the Research

Central Government has set a target that by 2020, 70% of the whole population will take part in 30 minutes of physical activity at least five times per week. However, the fact that fewer than one in five members of some BME Communities participate in such activity even as frequently as once a month, demonstrates that there are huge challenges to increasing levels of their participation in sport.

According to Sports Council for Wales the gap between female participation in sport and male levels has been closing, particularly among young people. However, the largest difference in male and female participation levels remains in outdoors sports participation. Differences in physical activity levels and indoor sport levels are less pronounced.

Contrary to popular belief, that different minority ethnic groups share similar experiences - differences between BME groups are significant. Rates of participation in sport amongst different ethnic minorities vary. One study undertaken by Sport England in 2000¹ showed that national participation rates for women (39%) were matched or exceeded by women from 'Black Other' (45%), 'Other' (41%) and Chinese (39%) ethnic groups while women who classified themselves as Black Caribbean (34%), Black African (34%), Indian (31%), Pakistani (19%) and Bangladeshi (19%) had participation rates below the national average for all women. And the gap between men and women's participation in sport is greater amongst some minority ethnic groups than it is in the population as a whole.

Hence, consideration should be given to women's needs in the development of new participation opportunities by ensuring that attention is given to the needs and interests of BME women, through design and access issues.

The Population of the Vale of Glamorgan

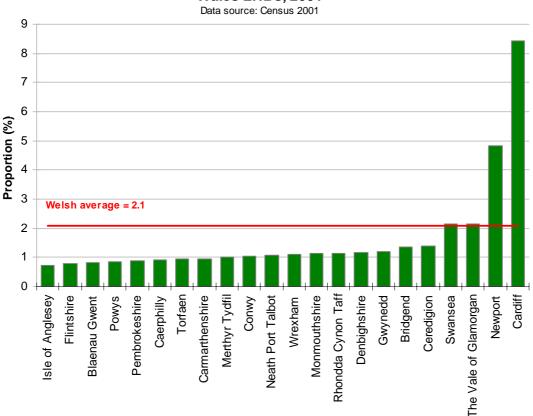
According to the Office of National Statistics' latest population Census, carried out in 2001, 2,577 people out of a total population of 119, 252 people in the Vale of Glamorgan County, or 2.16% were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background.

The chart below shows the proportion of persons who are non-white (Census 2001) at Local Health Board Level (LHB). LHBs are coterminous with local authorities in Wales.

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¹ Rowe N and champion R (2000) Sports Participation and Ethnicity in England, national survey 1999/2000 headline findings. London, Sport England.

Proportion of persons who are non-white, Wales LHBs, 2001



The chart above illustrates that the non-white population of the Vale of Glamorgan in 2001 accounted for 2.2% out of the total population of the region and exceeded the average level for Wales, 2.1%. In fact, the Vale of Glamorgan had the third highest proportion of the population from a BME background of Welsh local authorities in the 2001 Census.

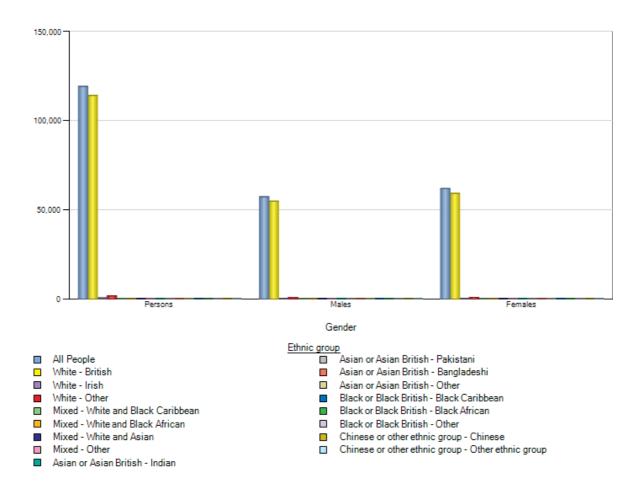
The table below shows population of the Vale of Glamorgan in 2001 by ethnic group broken down into gender categories.

Ethnic group	Persons	Males	Females
All people	119,303	57,348	61,955
White – British	114,261	54,913	59,348
White Irish	686	313	373

1,775	823	952
416	206	210
173	87	86
294	145	149
247	125	122
309	162	147
179	95	84
119	55	64
107	62	45
131	75	56
117	52	65
23	17	6
253	130	123
213	88	125
	416 173 294 247 309 179 107 131 23 253	416 206 173 87 294 145 247 125 309 162 179 95 119 55 131 75 117 52 23 17 253 130

Source: http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx

The table above illustrates that the largest minority ethnic group is Mixed Race (i.e. White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, Other Mixed) followed by Indian, Chinese and Pakistani.

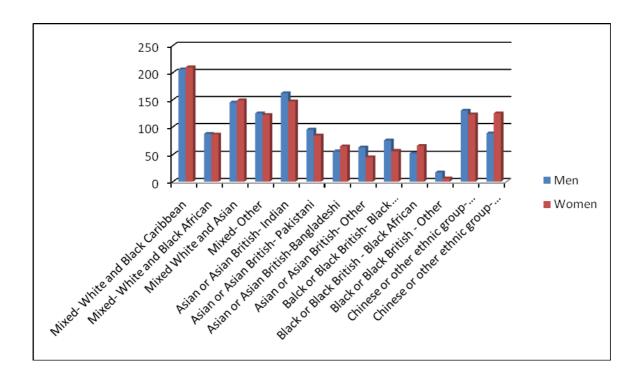


Source: www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

In terms of categorisation of religious groups, the Census identified the most widely practiced religion to be Christian, with 73% of the Vale population reporting this as their religion. Islam was then reported to be the next most common faith for the people of the Vale.

(http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=3581)

The chart below shows the proportion between men and women across particular ethnic group, 2001.



The resident BME population in the Vale of Glamorgan is predominantly located in areas of Penarth, Barry, Sully and Dinas Powys.

Existing Provision of Services within Leisure in the Vale of Glamorgan

We have carried out interviews with managers from all local leisure centres. They were asked to answer a set of questions that were as follows:

- How do you promote Leisure services?
- How do you make them more accessible for sedentary groups?
- What is the take up of the services amongst BME women?
- How do you advertise the services?

Key findings are as follows:

Penarth Leisure Centre provides female only sessions at the Wellness Suite which includes jacuzzi, sauna and steam room. They are held weekly on Thursday between 6pm and 8pm. On the average 4 - 5 BME women attend every week, with Pakistani,

Indian and Sri Lankan ladies amongst them. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that this facility is also used by a group of Somali women coming from Cardiff. Age groups differ from women in their early twenties to pensioners.

A fitness brand called Lifestyle is offered across the leisure centres. The gyms are geared towards engaging the sedentary market as to meet the need of addressing many health related issues – obesity, high blood pressure etc.

The take up of the services by BME users is not being monitored with any useful degree of accuracy. Only LifeStyle membership is monitored, however details regarding ethnicity are not compulsory and relevant statistics are not readily available.

Facilities are advertised on the Council website, in local newspapers and through internal posters and leaflets. However, there is no information available in ethnic minority languages.

Sports, Arts and Play Development Team openly admitted that previous attempts to engage with local communities had been difficult and that, at this stage, they were unsure how best to proceed. In the past the team had formally consulted with Barry Mosque to assess the need for the development of BME tailored leisure/sport services. However, the involvement of the community turned out not to be sustainable and no constructive feedback had been received from local Muslim groups.

Although Leisure Centres aim to provide fully inclusive services, during our consultation with leisure service managers, a number of concerns were expressed regarding the introduction of single sex sessions. The main issues were costs and sustainability of such services. Arguably, at present, demand for such facilities is not high enough for them to be cost effective, however, it is questionable how this demand is being assessed. Furthermore, buildings are not purpose built, with their layout not developed to accommodate single sex sessions. Open plan designed interiors and swimming pools' glass walls do not ensure privacy (although this could probably be adjusted by installing blinds and cubicles). Additionally, according to the leisure department, logistic problems exist. Lifeguards shift working patterns make it complicated to match female staffed shifts with women only sessions timetable. Moreover, concerns about translation costs were expressed. Given the current economic

climate, leisure facility providers feel the need to be even more careful when prioritising areas on which to spend their budget.

Consultation Findings

Race Equality First led a BME women focus group. Thirty participants took part in this consultation event. The participants' ethnic backgrounds were Urdu and Bengali speaking, Muslim and Hindu background. All the participants were residents of the Vale of Glamorgan and have wide family and social networks with other BME women in the area.

The consultation was arranged in order to hear the views and opinions of the BME Women living in the Vale of Glamorgan. The information gathered at this event would be used to assess the level of service within Leisure that is currently being delivered to BME Women to look at how this could be improved in the future.

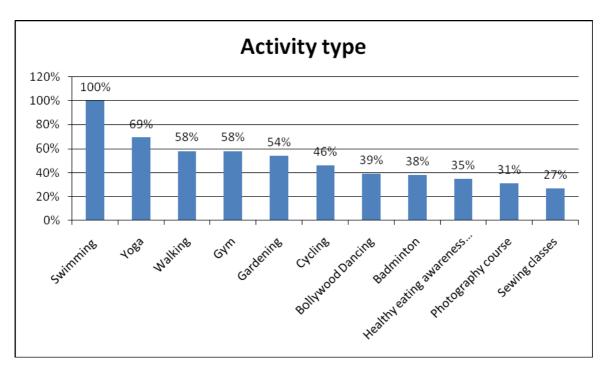
The consultation was a focus group discussion, with specific questions being asked, listed in appendix one. The consultation was facilitated by two interpreters. The following points were raised during the consultation:

- There was a general feeling that BME women were not aware of the facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and leisure activity locally. Also, the services and information on sporting activities were not accessible for them.
- The biggest problem was the lack of English. Offering outreach women only
 classes in community settings (e.g. community centres, libraries, mosques etc)
 was suggested as a possible solution. Participants also suggested that learning
 English in group settings would help.

- The main objection and the key barrier to participation in sport raised was the lack of women only leisure facilities (swimming and gym) in the Vale.
- The participants objected that there was no provision in Barry and to the fact
 that they had to pay more in petrol costs to access service by travelling to Cardiff.
 Also their parents would not be happy with them travelling to Cardiff on their
 own.
- Some participants stated that they could not find transport easily in their area (around Sully). Some of them don't know where to go for facilities as they don't speak English fluently.
- Those participants who did not drive and they were in majority found transport to be one of the key barriers to participation.
- Women who were parents to young children objected that there were no crèche facilities available.
- None of the participants were concerned whether instructors were from their own religious or cultural background as long as it was a woman and their religious requirements were met.
- There was an issue over the type of swimming costumes that Muslim women wear. Three years ago a participant had been asked to leave the jacuzzi at Barry Leisure Centre for health and safety reasons because she was wearing a three quarter length T shirt. She never went back to the leisure centre.
- A view was expressed that, the Asian community is overweight because they
 have nowhere to go to exercise. There is a high level of diabetes, high blood
 pressure and heart disease in BME communities. Organising healthy eating
 awareness sessions and workshops tailored around fitness was suggested.

- Some Asian people exercise at home, so there is not much opportunity to socialise and **many of them felt isolated**. Providing exercise sessions for these communities would not only be improving their health, but would also be an excellent opportunity to socialise.
- Asian elders were not aware of any leisure facilities/services, which would be accessible to them.
- There is nothing, in terms of sport, for Asian girls to get together. Organising
 activity fun days or a day trips was suggested as a way of socialising while
 doing some physical activities.
- It would be good to have a **community room** available to use **for gatherings**, **children parties**, etc.
- One of the participants said her daughter liked football, another that she liked rugby better and would like the opportunity to play but there was no one to play with.
- 69% of the participants have never been to a leisure centre
- 35% of the participants have never in their life gone to a swimming pool
- 10 % of the participants were familiar with local leisure centres

The participants were asked what leisure/sport activities they were interested in. The chart below reflects activity preferences in percentage terms.



- 100% participants were interested in taking swimming classes
- 69% were interested in Yoga classes
- 58% were interested in organised walking
- 58% were interested in attending gym
- 54% were interested in gardening
- 46% were interested in cycling
- 39% were interested in Bollywood Dancing
- 38% were interested in badminton sessions
- 35% were interested in participating in healthy eating awareness sessions
- 31% were interested in a photography course
- 27% were interested in sewing classes

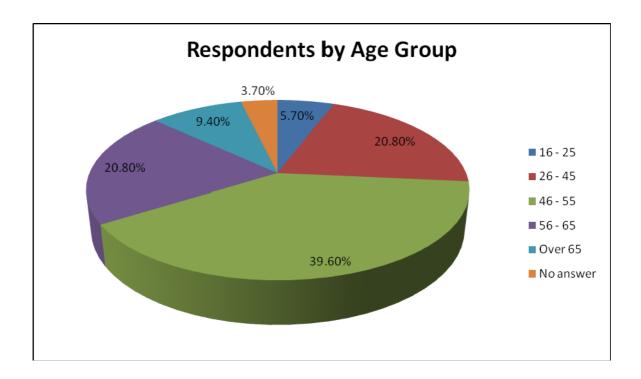
Questionnaire Analysis and Key Findings

This section will deconstruct the sample surveyed in the research presenting the inclusion of other social signifiers such as age, ethnicity and religion. It will present, in summary form, the key findings of the research and finally, will look at a number of correlations between the above sections of the survey respondents and selected questions to see if any patterns exist.

The size of the sample consisted of 53 BME women residing in the Vale of Glamorgan who filled in the questionnaires for this research.

The chart below presents the breakdown of the sample by age group which is as follows:

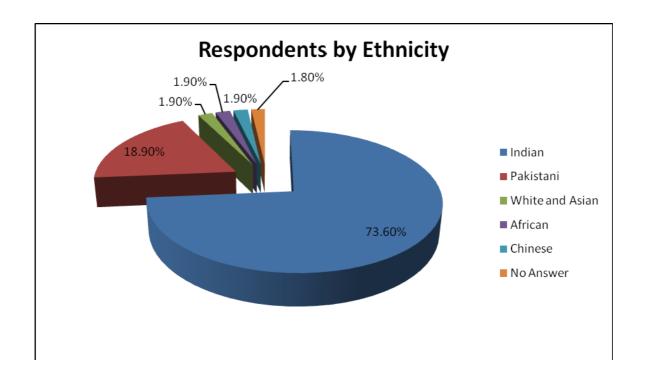
- 16 to 25 5.7 %
- 26 to 45 20.8 %
- 46 to 55 39.6 %
- 56 to 65 20.8 %
- Over 65 9.4 %
- No answer 3.7 %

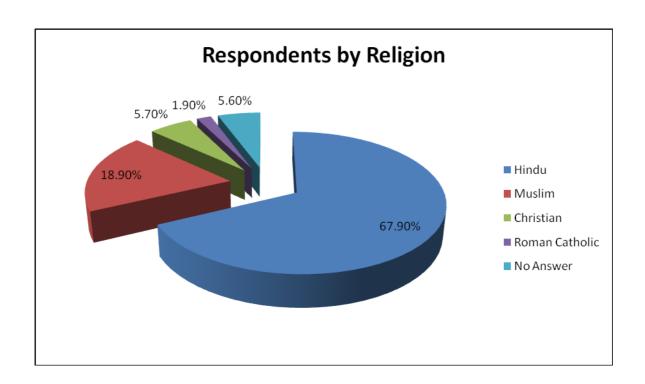


The chart below represents the percentages of respondents relating to ethnicity which is as follows. The largest number of respondents stated that their ethnicities were:

- Indian 73.6 %
- Pakistani 18.9 %
- White and Asian 1.9 %

- African 1.9 %
- Chinese 1.9 %
- No answer 1.8 %



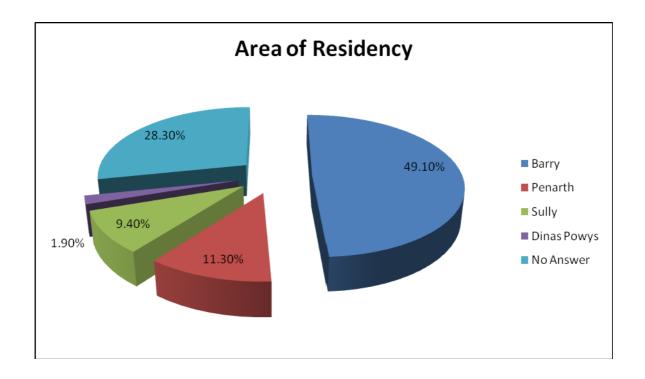


The chart above represents the percentages of respondents relating to religion which is as follows. The largest number of respondents stated that their religions were:

- Hindu 67.9 %
- Muslim 18.9 %
- Christian 5.7 %
- Roman Catholic 1.9 %
- No answer 5.6 %

The survey participants were asked to give their residential addresses and the following locations were selected most frequently:

- Barry 49.1 %
- Penarth 11.3 %
- Sully 9.4 %
- Dinas Powys 1.9 %
- No Answer 28.3 %



We asked women what services within Leisure they wanted to use. The answers given in percentages reflect the number of responses rather than respondents. Below are the highest five answers:

- 92.5 % stated they were interested in Yoga classes
- 86.8 % said they wanted to go to the swimming pool
- 79.2 % stated that they wanted to attend gym sessions
- 35.8 % were interested in Holiday activities
- 11.3 % showed interest in group walking and jogging
- 9.4 % said they wanted to learn Bollywood Dance.

When asked what barriers, regarding Leisure facilities, they had faced:

- 100 % stated as the key barrier lack of female only classes
- 100 % said that wanted female tutors/trainers
- 13. 2% said crèche was one of the main barriers to participation.

When asked whether they would use facilities if there were women only sessions, 100% respondents gave a positive answer.

We asked respondents whether they knew any other female members of their communities who were interested in using women only sessions, each of the respondents indicated another 2-3 ladies. Total number given was 118 women, which constitutes ca. 4.5 % of the whole BME population as per Census 2001 and ca. 9 % of the population of BME women in the Vale of Glamorgan (this is a very high percentage and, although partly, shows the demand for women only sessions).

Conclusion

It is important to note that the conclusions drawn are from the sample surveyed (community consultation and questionnaires) of 83 women that accounts for a considerable **6.47** % of the total 1282 Black and Minority Ethnic women of the Vale. Further to this, 100% of the sample surveyed stated that if there were female only sessions (Gym, Swimming pool, Yoga) provided they would use them.

A number of studies have been conducted to try to get a better understanding of what factors prevent BME women from participation in sport and physical activity. Our research also attempted to identify barriers to the participation of BME women in sport facilities.

The research clearly demonstrates that there are several issues that BME women face. The findings revealed that 100% of women surveyed stated that lack of safe and culturally accessible facilities such as women only sessions and female tutors were the key barriers to participation. They were also concerned that what they themselves considered to be appropriate attire for Muslim women participating in sport would not be accepted by instructors as being suitable.

A clear majority had experienced problems in using leisure centres due to the necessity for single-sex usage and the privacy problems caused by the open plan nature of the buildings. They cannot participate in or observe mixed-sex use of the centre but there is a very real desire in the community to use the leisure centres, particularly to attend swimming sessions, gym and yoga.

The needs around sex segregation and privacy do not apply to Muslim women only. They are similar among other BME women and anyone self-conscious of their bodies.

It seems that the age of the women surveyed is of some importance when it comes to the type of issues they face. The results indicated that the older age groups within the sample were more likely to find language barriers and transport preventing them from the participation in sport and Leisure facilities.

Pressure for childcare and lack of crèche facilities were identified as one of the major barriers among the participants of 16 -24 and 25 – 44 age groups.

The qualitative data provided pointed to a general lack of awareness about the sport and Leisure services available, as well as services and information not being accessible for women.

Recommendations

Leisure Centre Tours

Generally, there is a lack of awareness amongst BME women of the facilities and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. 69% of the consultation participants had never been to a leisure centre and 35% of the participants had never gone to a swimming pool. Only 10 % of the participants were familiar with local leisure centres. In order to tackle this barrier it is recommended that a series of leisure centre tours for BME women should be organised. The aim of these is to increase awareness of existing leisure facilities, meet staff and coaches, and understand the procedures for booking and using services.

The lack of awareness is to a certain extent due to a lack of advertising of services in a way that targets ethnic minority communities. Literature such as posters, leaflets and brochures are not translated. For some, Muslim women in particular, marketing information need to include what the exercise environment is like and whether it meets their religious requirements.

Partnerships with transport providers

It was identified that lack of transport was a particular problem for elderly women and for women with young children. These groups were more reliant on public transport, which can often prove inconvenient and expensive.

- Hence, working in partnership with local transport companies should be developed.
- Information about public transport should be provided.

- The participants of the services should be helped to organise themselves into groups, so they can go to and from venues together, or organise share a ride systems.
- Leisure centres should promote physical activities which do not require transport, such as walking and running. A partnership with MEWN Cymru (organisation for BME women, which runs specific physical activity projects) could support women in taking part in easily accessible, gentle physical activity in a friendly, supportive group.

Improve access to facilities

Lack of information in accessible formats creates serious barriers. Access can also be limited by unwelcoming attitudes and ignorance amongst staff and participants.

- Hence, all staff should be trained within equalities and diversity and be able and confident to be inclusive in their practice.
- More use should be made of community centres, schools and village halls rather than sport centres.
- Increase the use of the outdoors as it provides a more easily accessible, informal and non-threatening environment.

BME role models

Low participation rates among BME women led to low rates of volunteering, coaching, employment and leadership in sport. Thus, increasing the number of BME role models is vital. Training female volunteers to become lifeguards and swimming teachers would enable leisure centres to offer sessions for women only. It would also address the language barrier, as these women would be able to communicate in other BME community languages. Partnership working with both statutory and voluntary BME organisations and reaching out to female community leaders should be developed.

Women only sessions

When asked what the biggest barrier preventing them from using the Leisure services was, the answer given by 100% of the respondents was lack of women only sessions.

Thus single sex sessions, staffed by women should be provided. It is important to make sure these do not run next to a men's session. Provision of blinds and cubicles should be arranged in order to ensure women have enough privacy.

Cultural awareness

Attitudes to women and girls' bodies differ in different cultures and religions. However, swimming pools which don't allow women to wear T-shirts over their swimming costumes, and clubs which insist members wear tight-fitting and/or revealing uniforms can exclude those women who are concerned about appropriate modesty and those who are self-conscious of their bodies.

Strict requirements about clothing prevent some BME women from participation as well. Hence, swimmers should be allowed to wear T-shirts over their costumes and casual loose fitting sports clothes in the gym.

Childcare

Options for the provision of childcare should be closely investigated, helping with childcare costs and adopting a child friendly approach so that women can bring their children to the venue with them. Providing activities for both, women and children at the same time, could be a solution.

The provision of swimming sessions for mothers and children should be organised. This would allow quality time to be spent by the families whilst engaging in an activity.

Examples of good practice and recommendations

In other parts of the UK, leisure centres provide a range of single sex activities, for example:

Bollywood dance course organised by Rajma Begum – Active Communities
 Officer from Cardiff Council - at the India Centre in Cardiff.

The project proved to be very successful. A group of individuals underwent a training course and six of them became qualified Bollywood Dance Instructors who are now employed by Cardiff Council and running courses at different leisure centres. This new and innovative form of physical activity is attracting people from all different backgrounds including the white British community, thus encouraging community and social cohesion.²

Setting up and running this particular form of activity, which according to our research findings is in high demand, could be easily organised across venues within the Vale. Additionally, engaging the existing pool of instructors will sustain their employment.

- Single sex swimming sessions have been introduced as one of the initiatives undertaken within the BME Leisure Project in Cardiff.
 - Twelve women undertook lifeguard training with seven women becoming lifeguards. They have become role models breaking down barriers to participation in sport and physical activity and enthusiastically promoting the sessions amongst members of their communities.
 - > Five lifeguards have been employed to date and one lifeguard is available for employment when a new session is created.
 - ➤ Culturally sensitive uniforms have been provided for the female lifeguards.
 - > Transport was provided for the women to be able to attend the training.
 - ➤ Blinds were installed at Eastern Leisure Centre and cubicles were installed at Splott Pool to ensure privacy.
 - > Two women successfully trained to become swimming teachers.

The table below demonstrates the increase in attendance figures at Women Only Swimming Sessions. The number of women attending the Women Only swimming

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² The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Leisure Project – Rajma Begum

sessions has almost doubled from 2005 to 2006 due to the actions undertaken on this project.

Women Only Swimming Sessions			
Year	Maindy Swimming Pool	Splott Swimming Pool	
2004	3678	206	
2005	3987	433	
2006	7322	843	

• Changing Lifestyles Project run by MEWN Cymru within the frame of Mentro Allan Project

The project aims to increase activity levels amongst the hard to reach/ sedentary elements of the Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) population of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The project develops and supports programmes that increase opportunities for individuals and groups to access health enhancing physical activity in the outdoor environment.

The project is in its third year now and has attracted 810 participants in Cardiff & Vale up to date. Two hundred eighty seven activities have been completed to date. However, the project coordinator admitted that it had not been easy to reach out to women in the Vale of Glamorgan to get their message out due to their isolation and dispersion across the area. Nevertheless, a group of 10 Asian women took part in Yoga sessions that have recently been organised in Barry. Since then many more women started showing their interest and filled in activity booking forms.

MEWN Cymru identified the gaps in mainstream service provision and has found their way of overcoming some of the existing barriers. These are due to their awareness of the cultural and religious concerns, friendly and enthusiastic approach amongst other qualities.

Networking between the Council and MEWN Cymru as well as with other organisations working with BME communities should be increased.

Appendix 1

- 1. What do you know about provision of services within Leisure by the Vale of Glamorgan Council?
- 2. What Council services within Leisure do you use and what is your experience of these?
- 3. Are there any barriers preventing you from using Leisure services provided by the Council?
- 4. What improvements could be made to increase the engagement of BME women in sport and physical activities in the Vale of Glamorgan?

Appendix 2

Race Equality First - Demand for Leisure Services by Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the Vale of Glamorgan Survey

This research is being carried out on behalf of Race Equality First, the race equality council for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The purpose of this survey is to understand the experiences of black and minority ethnic women in relation to Leisure facilities provided by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. It seeks to evaluate the current situation and better estimate demand for provision of Leisure services by different BME groups. One of the aims of the research is to gain evidence to help provide better services.

All surveys are confidential so please answer the questions as fully as possible and as honestly as possible.

Please use the tick boxes for your answers and fill in all questions.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey.

1. What services within Leisure do you	want to use?
2. What barriers, regarding Leisure faci	ilities, do you face?
3. If there were any women only sessio	ns provided would you use them?
•	atives, members of your community who are essions? If so, please state how many.
It would help us if you could provide us with remain confidential. Please can you tell us y	n some other details – again this information will rour:
Gender:	
Male □ Female □	Transgender □
Age:	
Ethnicity:	
White:	Mixed:
□ British	☐ White and Black Caribbean
□ English	□White and Black African
□ Scottish	☐ White and Asian
□ Welsh	
□ Irish	A .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1 .1
Any other White background (please specify):	Any other mixed background (please specify):
Asian:	Black:
☐ Asian British	☐ Black British
□ Asian English	□Black English
□ Asian Scottish	☐ Black Scottish
□ Asian Welsh	☐ Black Welsh
□ Asian Irish	☐ Black Irish
□ Indian	☐ Caribbean
□ Pakistani	□ African

□ Bangladeshi	
Any other Asian Background (please specify):	Any other Black background (please specify):
Chinese:	Travellers:
□ Chinese	☐ Irish Heritage
□ Chinese British	☐ Gypsy Roma
□ Chinese English	
☐ Chinese Scottish	
□ Chinese Welsh	
□ Chinese Irish	
Any other Chinese background (Please specify):	Any other Traveller (please specify):
happy for us to contact you please write do number or postal address below so that we	vs to gather more information, if you would be own your name and email address or telephone
Name:	
Telephone number:	
Address:	

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey.