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Amnesty International UK

How to talk about Football Welcomes

About Football Welcomes

Football Welcomes is an exciting and growing programme at Amnesty International UK that aims to create more welcoming communities for people who have fled conflict and persecution, and are rebuilding their lives in the UK. Football Welcomes currently has two strands:

1. The Football Welcomes weekend

During the Football Welcomes weekend, which takes place every April, we encourage football clubs to celebrate the contribution players with a refugee background make to the game, and the role that football can play in bringing people together. Participating clubs do this by putting on events and activities for refugees and people seeking asylum who live near their stadiums, such as offering free tickets, organising a match, tournament or stadium tour, for example.

2. The Football Welcomes Community Project

The Community Project, launched this summer, involves Amnesty working with Aston Villa Foundation, Doncaster Rovers Foundation, Leicester City in the Community, Liverpool County FA and Liverpool FC Foundation, and Middlesbrough FC Foundation, to set up 'community alliances' with other local organisations including refugee groups, charities, amateur football teams, fans' groups, schools and others.

In addition, we have recently appointed a Women's Football Officer to work across all areas of Football Welcomes to ensure that it is inclusive of women and girls from a refugee background, and women's clubs.

The objective of the programme is to create more welcoming communities for refugees through football and encourage those who are part of more established groups in the community to work together and open their doors to those who have arrived more recently.

The programme creates opportunities for people to adjust to a new country and culture through making new friends and connections, learning English and taking part in sports with all the physical and mental health benefits it can bring. We believe that everyone, especially those with more power and privilege, should strive to contribute to creating more welcoming, cohesive communities.

Media and communications

External communications are an essential part of Football Welcomes and the language and imagery used should be positive, inclusive and respectful. Anyone communicating about Football Welcomes should take care not to reinforce negative stereotypes or prejudice, or use language that could be interpreted as representing refugees as ‘other’, or that sets up an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dynamic.

To give an example, we would avoid saying: “Football (or Football Welcomes) helps to integrate/welcome refugees/**them** into **our** communities” because we believe communities belong to all who live in them. We should also avoid saying ‘these people’ or ‘those people’ when referring to refugees or people seeking asylum.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions for how to talk about Football Welcomes:

- Talk about football having the power to *bring people together*
- Talk about the role of football in *creating more welcoming communities*
- Mention that football can play an important role in welcoming refugees in communities across the country
- Say that by welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum through football, clubs can help promote integration
- Where possible, say ‘people who have fled conflict and persecution’ rather than ‘refugee’. Say ‘people seeking asylum’ or ‘someone seeking asylum’ rather than ‘asylum seeker’

Some language not to use:

- **Illegal immigration, illegal migrant**
- **Granted (or given) refugee status:** Refugee status is not given or granted. It is a status held by anyone outside of their country of nationality and unable to return there because of the risk of persecution. A refugee’s status is **recognised** – in the UK (as in many countries) following a determination process.
- **Migrant or refugee crisis:** This frames refugees and other migration as a problem, and not only a problem but a big or imminently threatening one.

Football Welcomes and gender

Language and imagery around gender should be inclusive and respectful. We should avoid reinforcing sexism and gender stereotypes when talking about Football Welcomes.

As a general rule, we would recommend:

- Try to avoid saying ‘football’ (to refer to men’s football) and ‘women’s football’. When gender is relevant, call them ‘men’s team’ and ‘women’s team’, or say ‘women’s football’ and ‘men’s football’, when it’s not, there is no need to mention it.
- Try to avoid saying the ‘first team’ and the ‘women’s team’, instead consider saying ‘men’s first team’ and the ‘women’s first team’.
- Similarly, if we refer to the ‘Women’s World Cup’, we should call the tournament for men the ‘Men’s World Cup’.
- Same goes for players. For example, we would recommend saying ‘Chelsea defender Anita Asante’ instead of ‘Chelsea Women defender Anita Asante’.

How to talk about Amnesty International UK and the partnership

On first reference to Amnesty in any comms copy please write the full: Amnesty International UK. On second reference you are OK to just write 'Amnesty'.

If you would like to include boilerplate copy about Amnesty, please use the following:
Amnesty International is the world's leading human rights organisation with more than seven million supporters worldwide.

Key messages for the partnership are below:

1. Football clubs are at the heart of many communities, they bring people together and give many a sense of belonging.
2. For people fleeing conflict and persecution, football can play a hugely important role in helping to settle into a new country and culture.
3. This year, Amnesty has launched the Football Welcomes Community Project to help create more welcoming communities for refugees and people seeking asylum across the UK. This exciting new programme of work, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, will see Amnesty working with a number of professional clubs and county FAs over the next three years to set up community alliances, working with other local organisations including refugee groups, local charities, amateur football teams, fans' groups, schools and others.

Informed consent and safeguarding

Please make sure that any participants doing interviews for local, national or club media have given their **informed consent** to being involved.

Interviews with participants for local and national media, club/foundation websites and social channels should focus on the role football has played in helping an individual find their feet in a new country and new community.

We recommend the following:

- Please take steps to ensure that journalists steer clear of asking why someone left their country of origin and how they got to the UK, as telling these stories can be retraumatising.
- Please explain to participants exactly what the interview is for and where it will be published or broadcast, whether it will go online, and consider with them any risks of taking part, including to the outcome of their asylum claim (if they are seeking asylum), their safety and the safety of family members in their countries of origin (or possibly in other countries).
- Explain that once something is in the public domain, it might not be possible to erase it. Participants need to be able to understand what you're saying and fully able to assess the options and make an informed decision with that information.
- Talk through the positive effects of being involved and the impact the interview could have for the project, such as encouraging more people to take part in the football sessions or inspiring other organisations to get involved with this work.

- Please make sure the participant understands that they are not obliged to speak to media, or to answer any question they are not comfortable with. Someone appropriate should be available to help ensure that the participant is not left in a position where they feel pressured, however innocently, to answer a question beyond what they have agreed to or reasonably expected.
- Similarly, if people at your event are wearing Football Welcomes t-shirts, badges or stickers, whether there are media there or not remember that participants who are refugees or seeking asylum may not want to wear them. Please make sure they know they are under no obligation to do so.

For future reference, it's important to note that media interviews that may include information concerning the participant's personal story (e.g. the country they are from, their experiences there, their journey to the UK, why they have claimed asylum, similar information about their family etc.), will require far greater care than shorter interviews focused solely on football and settling in to life in the UK.

Before agreeing to an interview like this, the press officer or other member of staff arranging it, should talk to the participant and their asylum lawyer to ascertain that there is no risk of giving any impression, however innocent or minor, of inconsistency with information that was or is before the Home Office for deciding any claim or referral in their case (e.g. an asylum claim, a family reunion application or a resettlement referral).

This includes a claim, application or referral that is yet to be made, is outstanding or has already been decided. In rare cases, there may also be a need for expert advice on the implications of a publication or broadcast for the safety of family members in the person's country of origin or elsewhere

Please note it is a criminal offence for someone to offer immigration advice (which includes advising about the prospects or impact on their asylum claim or status) unless that person is formally regulated to do this.