

## Gymnastics Best Practice Guide; Engaging Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Girls in Gymnastics

This information resource has been developed as a result of a short research project carried out by Seyram Atubra at British Gymnastics to look into the reasons why Bangladeshi girls do not participate in Gymnastics club activity. Although the research was conducted with Bangladeshi girls the findings will apply to most BME groups, particularly those of South Asian origin. The document has been put together by Shaheen Bi, Research Manager at Sporting Equals using the findings of the research and will help provide British Gymnastics with a framework for learning and best practice which it can use to help promote club development.

Barriers	Issues	Top Tips for British Gymnastics	Top Tips for Clubs
Parental Buy In	Academic/religious knowledge and family responsibilities are often given higher priority which may conflict with other out of school sports activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get schools to offer Gymnastics as part of PE and help educate parents around the health benefits.</li> <li>Promote the wider benefits of Gymnastics around skills, self esteem, confidence and ability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasise and promote beginner/fun sessions to get girls attracted to gymnastics.</li> <li>Ensure timetabling does not clash with other afterschool activity such as mosques.</li> <li>Think about timing of events and safety concerns parents may have if sessions are after dark.</li> <li>Set up a parents evening to develop links with club coaches and staff so the parents can ask any questions and club can address any concerns parents may have.</li> <li>Consult with parents around timing and ensure girls can get safely to and from events when family is unable to pick up or drop off.</li> <li>Get buy-in from the teachers and get them to work with parents to promote Gymnastics.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Understanding and Knowledge</b></p>	<p>There is often a lack of understanding around the different disciplines of Gymnastics and what is involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise levels of understanding through schools and higher education establishments.</li> <li>• Produce a simple guide so people can understand the basic rules under each discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer open days and taster sessions to help involve the community and raise awareness of the different disciplines of gymnastics.</li> <li>• Provide simple guide to rules of each discipline. Cover rules, what to wear, expectations etc..</li> <li>• Consult with young women about how they can fit Gymnastics into their daily life and how they can be supported to access coaching qualifications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Religious and Cultural Barriers</b></p>	<p>Depending on religious conformity many girls will not be allowed to wear clothing such as leotards and will not be comfortable with having their legs exposed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review how clubs implement rules around dress.</li> <li>• Develop flexible standards around dress to ensure Gymnastics become inclusive to all communities.</li> <li>• Offer women only courses to encourage BME women to become coaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer women only sessions run by women only coaches, and encourage women volunteers from the community.</li> <li>• Clubs need to be flexible with clothing as most women of faiths will cover up when taking part in sports.</li> <li>• Consultation is key with both the individual and parents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Experiences</b></p>	<p>Gymnastics is often started at a very early age. Cultural differences mean that BME parents see childhood as a time for play and fun rather than taking part in a disciplined activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Regional Staff to organise taster sessions through places like doctors surgeries, health clinics, parent and toddler groups etc.. to get parents engaged with Gymnastics earlier on in childhood.</li> <li>• Open up networking opportunities with schools PE Departments to ensure Gymnastics is a available option through primary schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with schools and community centres in the area to promote Gymnastics and the opportunities available specifically targeting BME communities.</li> <li>• Support club coaches to develop initiatives through schools and to allow them to identify children with talent and work with parents to help break down barriers to accessing routes through clubs.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community Buy In</b></p>	<p>Communities don't often see the benefits of Gymnastics and the establishment is often perceived as 'elite /white' and concerns may therefore be expressed at girls attending these clubs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop focus groups to help identify community concerns.</li> <li>• Form partnerships with mosques and community groups and raise the profile of the Gymnastics through links with festivals etc.</li> <li>• Attend local careers fairs and ensure jobs advertised in BME press and other networks,</li> <li>• Create positive action initiatives at club level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create role models and more visible BME faces.</li> <li>• Build relationships by offering taster sessions – often BME communities will not just turn up at a club they need to be invited to attend.</li> <li>• Look at potential developing a satellite club at the local school so that young people can stay with their peers and yet still associate the after school club with a professional club. It may take a while to gain approval from the community however this is a good starting point.</li> <li>• Access information and support from BME / Faith voluntary and community organisations who may be able to offer training and awareness raising sessions for club staff to visit mosques, temples, synagogue etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lack of Role Models</b></p>	<p>The absence of BME role models can reinforce stereotypical views of Gymnastics being an 'all white' elite sport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify 'role models' from within Gymnastics to help generate interest.</li> <li>• Develop training / mentoring / media awareness for people identified as possible role models / ambassadors to the sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and train women coaches so they can deliver sessions to the community and also serve as a role model to other girls.</li> <li>• Support potential role models in light of their interests, skills and experiences.</li> <li>• Get role models to act as mentors for other girls.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Facilities &amp; Environment</b></p>	<p>Girls and parents need to be assured that the environment is safe and appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support clubs to create an inclusive and welcoming club environment.</li> <li>• Ensure any plans to for re-improvement take account of the communities that are in the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer other community activities at the club and link this to Gymnastics.</li> <li>• Ensure facilities can be set up to offer women only sessions.</li> <li>• Ensure safe spaces are available for prayer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost</b></p>	<p>Often BME communities have lower household incomes than the white population and therefore less money to spending on leisure activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports which are less expensive and require less equipment such as Athletics, football, badminton etc.. are more popular with BME groups so more effort is required by Gymnastics to try and attract these participants and make the sport more appealing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider offering subsidised club membership.</li> <li>• Ensure sessions through schools and other taster sessions are free.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marketing &amp; Media</b></p>	<p>Gymnastics tends to generate images of the dominant group, which is 'White British' girls of higher socio-economic status. Lack of information has also been identified as a key barrier.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Gymnastics by using inclusive imagery and focusing on diversity.</li> <li>• Develop a list of BME media and ensure regular articles are submitted to generate interest and awareness of Gymnastics in BME communities.</li> <li>• Develop an inclusive marketing strategy.</li> <li>• Create a presence at prestigious event such as British Asian Sports Awards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use local knowledge and community contacts to promote Gymnastics.</li> <li>• Use targeted marketing campaigns to attract BME groups.</li> <li>• Use appropriate diverse images of Gymnastics on websites, newsletters.</li> <li>• Promote Gymnastics as a fun recreational activity, (not necessarily competitive).</li> <li>• Ensure opportunities are promoted and information is easily accessible for all communities.</li> </ul>