



Workshops on access to healthy food and greenspace: Summary

Race & the right to a healthy environment

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**Equality and
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**Independent
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**WILLIAM GRANT
FOUNDATION**

Race & right to a healthy environment

164 countries now recognise the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Including this in Scots law would encourage policies to tackle inequalities in our environments and our health.

But little is known about the existing experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Scotland.



On the 22nd August 2024 we welcomed 36 people from different minority ethnic backgrounds to share their lived experiences of accessing healthy food, parks and other green spaces.



Aims of the workshops

- To understand the lived experiences and impacts of lack of access to healthy and sustainably produced food, and to multifunctional, nature-rich parks and other greenspaces.
- To acknowledge that people from minority ethnic groups are not all the same but that they may share common experiences. This may be similar to the majority communities in the same area or it may have additional aspects – and this needs to be explored and better understood.
- To explore what measures could be introduced to respond to the priorities of Black and Minority Ethnic groups in Scotland so that the right to a healthy environment can become a reality for our diverse communities - to create a fairer, greener and healthier Scotland for everyone.

Access to multifunctional, nature rich parks and other green spaces



Accessibility to parks and other green spaces

Q1. How close is your nearest greenspace and is it easy to get to?

- The majority of participants lived 5-10 minutes away.
- On the whole, participants felt that local greenspace was easy to access even if further away (with one notable exception who lived in Greenock).
- Participants appreciated that local spaces were free with no restrictions.
- Access to community gardens was more challenging and often a bus drive away and therefore expensive (£6 - £13.50).


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“What is a culture shock for me is that these greenspaces are free. In my country you have to pay for a park. Here you can go in there if you don't have money, it's equal”



- There were very good examples of accessible parks in Glasgow that also had opportunities for participation e.g. Elder Park, Alexander Parade, Pollock Park, Glasgow Green and Springburn Park.
- Participants enjoyed talking about the different cultural experiences of using greenspaces in different countries, urban and rural areas.
- Engagement depended on support from local organisations and councillors.
- Participants noted they were a self-selected group who had chosen to attend the workshops because they were already interested in the topic.

However...



Participants who had experiences of discrimination and anti-social behaviour, consequently stopped using parks and spoke about missing the benefits for their health and wellbeing.

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“Very scared of recent events of hate and discrimination. For the last month I have been scared to go to the park...get looks from different people”



- Accessibility depends on location.
- Very negative experiences for Gypsy/Traveller People with no access to greenspace on residential sites and close proximity to landfill.



“There are concerns for safety. Being a person of colour, you can be an easy target. Have to be very careful... even if you are not causing the problem, you will be pointed to and be blamed, as a person of colour”

Use of parks and other green spaces

Q2. Do you use your local parks and green spaces? If yes, what is enjoyable about it?



- Greenspaces are valued and often used.
- Adults valued the mental health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors (particularly as an escape from poor accommodation).
- Participants appreciated healthy greenspaces in contrast to polluted urban towns from home countries in Africa and Iran, and that parks were free.





“*Therapeutic space*”

“*I take time to listen to the birds and watch the flowers*”

Barriers to greenspaces

Q3. What stops you from using your greenspace as much as you would like to?

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- Considerable fear of dogs.
 - Poor maintenance including litter, dog fouling and bins not emptied.
 - Perceptions of safety.
 - Lack of information on location and *“the culture of using parks”* – which is different for many asylum seekers/refugees and *“not knowing what you can do there and where it is safe”*.



Participants who had experiences of discrimination and anti-social behaviour, spoke about how this had prevented them from using parks more often and how they missed the benefits for their health and wellbeing.

Desired change

Q4. What could be better/what changes would make you want to use your local greenspace more?

To ensure spaces are welcoming for all cultures and ages these changes are needed.



- Clear information from housing associations on the location of local parks and information that it is free and open to everyone and the 'cultural rules'.
- Targeted nature sensitive lighting on main pathways for safety.
- A mix of nature areas and 'programmed' spaces for social and active use.
- Regular maintenance.
- Improved amenities such as seating, shelter and toilets.
- Separate dog areas and awareness raising/education for dog owners.
- 'Park confidence' group sessions (including how to respond to dogs and unruly behaviour) similar to cycling confidence sessions.
- More organised trips to nature-rich spaces.
- CCTV for safety or additional security.
- More community gardening opportunities.
- More inclusion of minority ethnic groups and different ages in designing local parks and activities.

Access to multifunctional, nature rich parks and other green spaces

Learnings and key messages

- Participants were mainly from the Glasgow area and support the work that Glasgow has done on improving greenspace (one person from Dundee).
- There is a need to simplify and explain what 'greenspace' means and how to access and use different spaces.
- Greenspace and access to nature are significant to people who recognise the benefits to their mental health and wellbeing.
- Racism, poverty, housing and location create intersectional injustice that can prevent people from using greenspace as much as they would like to – and this is different in different areas and for different ethnic groups.
- More exploration and understanding are needed on how experiences of racism affect people's views, concerns, and aspirations.
- Value the expertise from lived experience to inform the policymaking processes and not assuming a 'deprivation' model – throughout the day there were many excellent solutions, existing and emerging.

Access to healthy and sustainable food



Perception of healthy and sustainable food

Q1. What does healthy and sustainable food mean to you?

- Participants valued protein and plant rich foods.
- Cooking from scratch was considered healthy and ready meals were perceived as unhealthy.
- It was strongly felt that participants' countries of origin provided healthier food and there was disappointment in the food options easily available in Scotland.
- Food labels stating 'natural' and 'healthy' are deceptive and create confusion.



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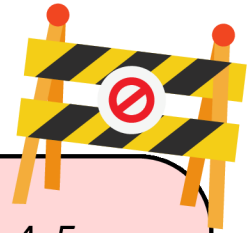
“I know what healthy looks like”

“Healthy is what we inherited as people with culture”

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Barriers to accessing healthy and sustainable food

Q2. How do you access healthy food? How do you access food in general?



- Groceries have become more expensive in the last 4-5 years and participants shared their meticulous budgeting methods.
- All cultural food is much more expensive.
- Farmers markets are not accessible due to higher costs, transport, and awareness of where and when they are.
- Cooking foods considered healthy by participants is increasingly difficult due to high costs, leading to changes in diet.
- Participants who had used food banks said that it was mainly expired food items with little or no fresh food.

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“The cost of African food and ingredients in this country is very expensive. Especially challenging for asylum seeker”

“Buying halal food in stores is more expensive than food in supermarkets”

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Desired change

Q3. How do you think your access to healthy food can be improved?



- Culturally inclusive messaging on healthy diets from public bodies and media to address the current confusion on what is healthy.
- The universal right to healthy food must include a diversity of healthy food options for different cultures and dietary requirements.
- There must be improved food quality and culturally appropriate food for asylum seekers to address the current food crisis in provision.
- Consult with asylum seekers to reduce food waste because of unfamiliar foods being provided.
- There needs to be more pressure on providers to produce ethical and sustainable food.
- Community food hubs to be able to eat affordable food together.
- Bring cultural knowledge and learnings to food growing systems to Scotland.
- Consider subsidies for growing cultural food.
- Increase opportunities for community growing.

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“If we want true sustainability, we need to move down to community and ask what they want. Allow us to plant our own vegetables. Nobody wants junk food or tinned food. Plucking your own vegetables is a good feeling and we want that”



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“Policymakers assume that we have no idea or don’t understand what healthy sustainable food is, they need to come to speak to locals and local organisations and make better policies. They cannot speak about me, they don’t know anything about me, bring in local communities to make decisions”

Access to healthy and sustainable food

Learnings and key messages

- Culture has a significant influence on what is perceived as healthy food. Obtaining healthy, culturally appropriate and affordable food is very difficult.
- Food options closely available to participants were disappointing and they see ready-made meals as unhealthy and 'healthy' labelled foods as misleading.
- Food prices are always increasing, and healthy and sustainable food is increasingly difficult to obtain.
- Transparency of the food chain from producer to retailer is important.
- Food provisions for asylum seekers are often poor quality and not culturally appropriate. Engagement with asylum seekers was seen as a necessary step to overcome this.
- There is a strong desire to grow food and share cultural knowledge to food growing systems in Scotland.
- Emphasis on food production rather than consumption is needed for food production systems to be ethical and sustainable.

About the project team

Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) (SC050257)

supports people to use the law to protect their right to a healthy environment, tackle climate change and hold public bodies and polluters to account.

CEMVO Scotland (SC034104) is a national intermediary organisation with a mission underpinned by racial equality to build the capacity and sustainability of the ethnic minority voluntary sector and its communities.

Nourish Scotland (SC048239) is a charity focusing on food policy and practice. They work for a fair, healthy and sustainable food system that truly values nature and people.

Poverty Alliance (SC019926) is Scotland's anti-poverty network. They bring together campaigners and communities to rebalance the distribution of power and resources.

