

Refugees join Mayor and West Ham for football in the sun

On a sweltering summer's day, refugees joined other Londoners for football as part of the Great Get Together, an event to celebrate community inspired by the late Jo Cox MP.

Syria, Sudan, Rwanda and Nepal were represented among our footballers, who after their game met the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, for photographs around the picnic table.

The Great Get Together, held in Newham's Olympic Park as part of a national series of events, also hosted other sports, food, music and photography. Thousands gathered in celebration of the idea that there is more which unites than divides people.

West Ham FC and Show Racism the Red Card were on hand to set up, referee, coach, provide professional expertise and talk to the teams, for whom football provides an important part of settling into their new communities in the UK. The players got to know each other as the day went on, sharing their experience and ambitions – some are currently studying for careers in fields from social work to engineering.

Sport is a universal language and a powerful force for integration from the ground up. Migrant Voice are incredibly grateful to the players for coming down, for the support of West Ham and Show Racism the Red Card, as well as the Mayor of London, the Jo Cox Foundation and all those who made the Great Get Together a great day out.

Sport, leisure and culture can provide a vital lifeline to newcomers adjusting to a new life. The spirit of the Great Get Together should not last for one sunny day in June, but go into ensuring that opportunities for people from different communities to come together are made available to all.