

mpdale · Oct 25, 2024

Calder Community Squash - making your squash club more inclusive

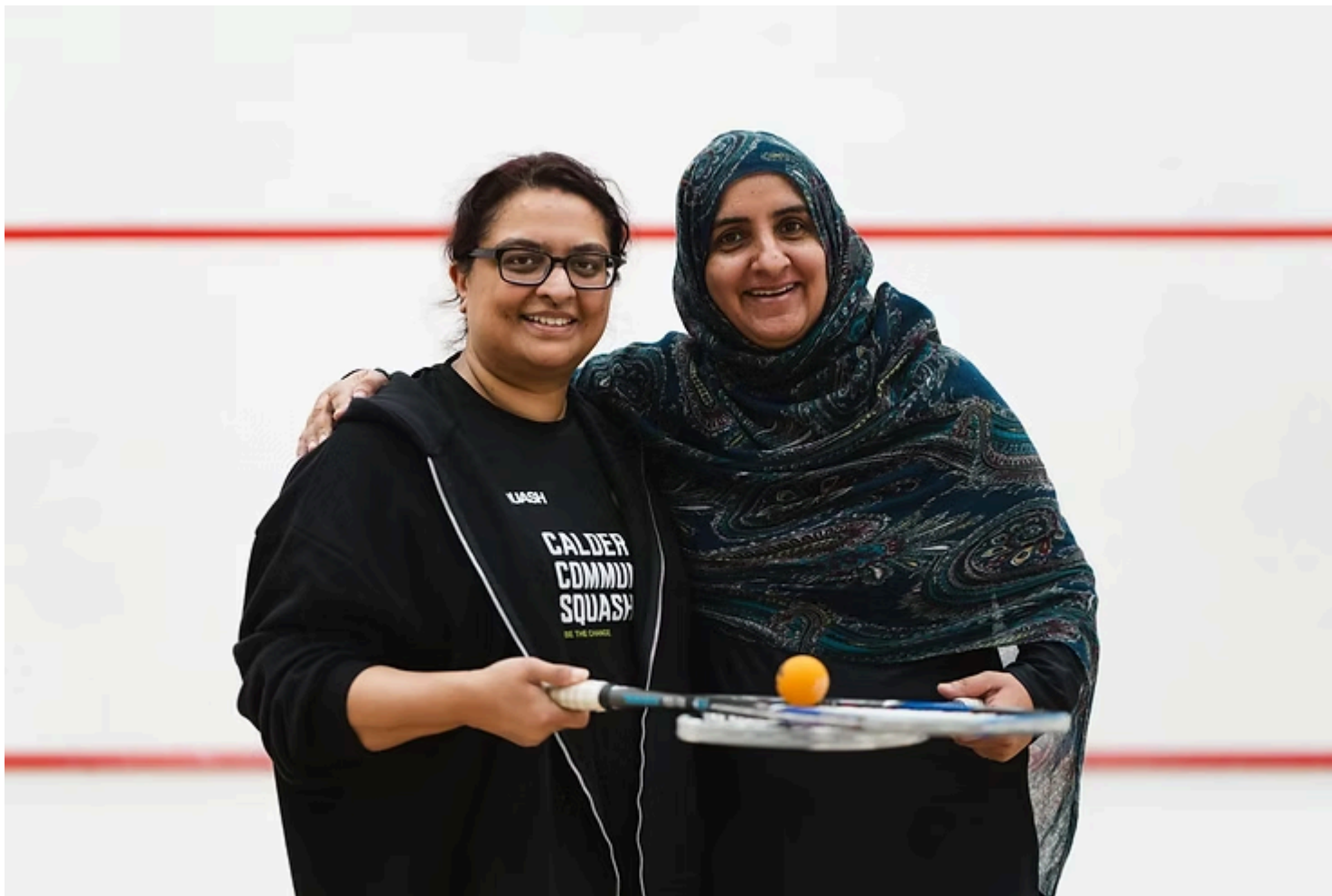


Aron Harper-Robinson founded [Calder Community Squash](#) in 2021 to support under-served young people in his hometown of Halifax in northern England. His programmes have proven to be so successful that they have now spread to more than 25 clubs across the country and are funded by a host of partners including [England Squash](#) and the National Lottery.

Calder Community Squash's award-winning programmes include:

- **Squash from the Mosque** which builds links between squash clubs and their nearest mosque to get children from the Muslim community into the sport
- **Mixed Ability Squash** for young people with learning impairments and physical disabilities
- **We See You** to help integrate refugees and asylum seekers into their local community
- **Squash and Scrان** combining squash with cooking lessons for young people

These inclusive programmes are aimed at helping clubs make connections with the community beyond their front doors, which so many of England's clubs do not do.



Aron says the traditional British members' club model "just isn't working any more." Instead, he is trying to help instil a "culture shift" so that these clubs become more dynamic and inclusive by engaging with their local communities - for the good of the sport as well as to benefit new players from wider demographics.

"I'm still amazed when I tell people at a mosque or a local charity that there is a squash club around the corner - and they didn't even know it was there," says Aron. "People are not going to come and knock on the door of the squash club - that doesn't really happen any more. Clubs must think, 'How can we let the community know that we want them to come and play squash?'"

CLUB CULTURE

"Squash clubs can be imposing places for outsiders," says Aron. "I visit many clubs who call themselves inclusive but really they are not. Clubs need to look at themselves honestly and ask whether they have an environment that is welcoming for everyone. Do they understand the vast number of barriers to participation?"

By understanding the needs of their local community, clubs can start to tailor their offering to them and offer flexible ways to participate. "That's quite big and scary for members' clubs in this country, but it's where we've got to start so we can become a community sport," says Aron.



Aron Harper-Robinson founded Calder Community Squash

CONNECT

Aron began his Calder Community Squash programmes in Halifax by reaching out to his local Muslim faith centre. He literally had children hitting a ball against the wall of the mosque, then a few weeks later invited them to nearby [Old Crossleyans Squash Club](#) (which none of them knew existed) for fun-filled sessions. There are now 17 clubs nationally running Squash from the Mosque programmes.

Aron also contacted local charities who work with young people with disabilities and learning difficulties (such as [disability day care centres](#)) and set up sessions with them. There are now 25 clubs running Mixed Ability initiatives across England.

"The more kids you work with, the more uptake you will get," says Aron. "You've just got to keep providing more opportunities that offer a pathway into the club.

"Participation is participation. It's not all about getting people to represent your first team. I see so many coaches just working one-to-one with members. Connecting with the local community is great exposure for your club and it gets new people in at off-peak times."



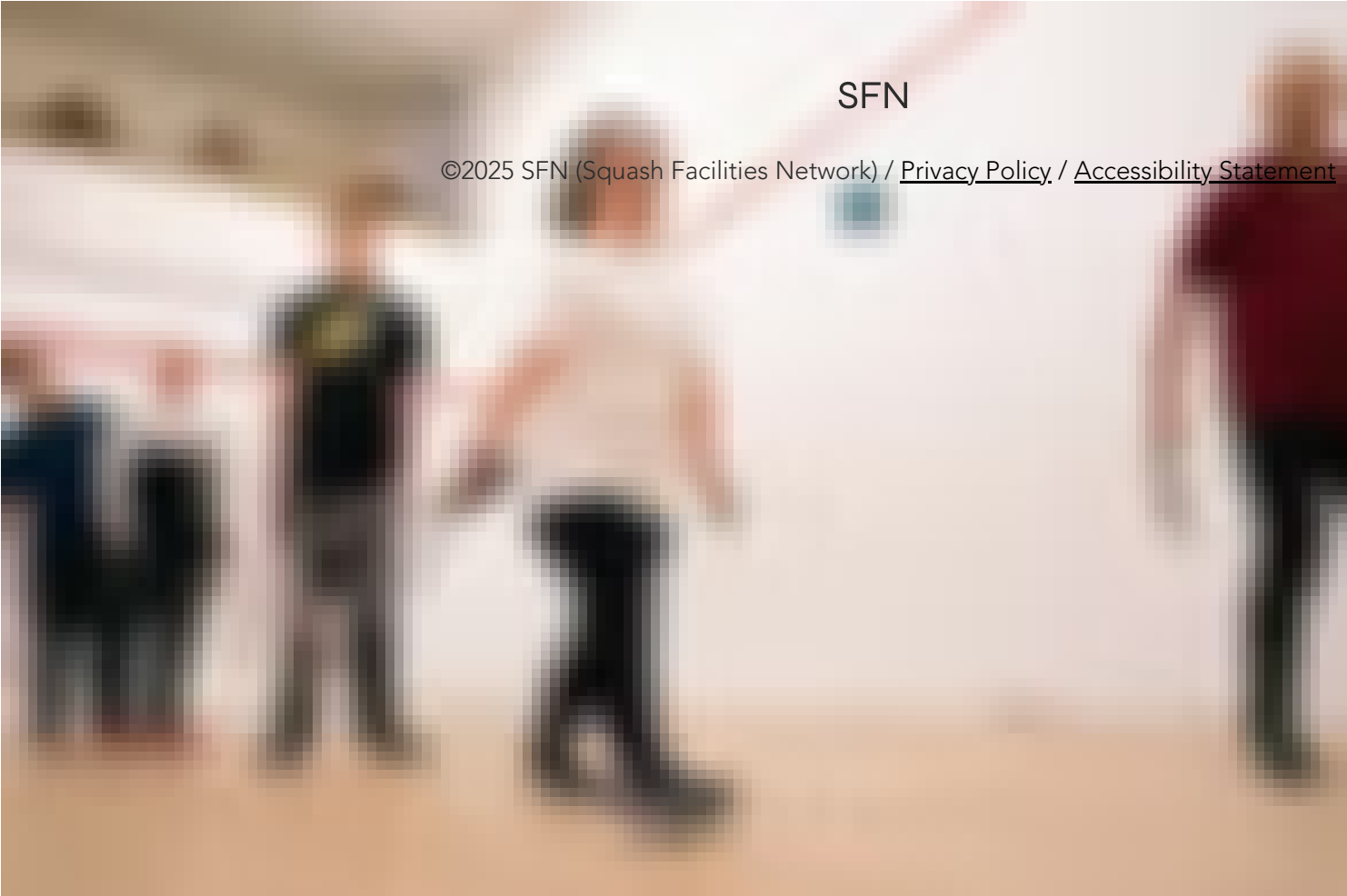
'CHAMPIONS'

Aron finds that many clubs don't start community programmes because of a lack of capacity or simply not knowing where to start. He stresses that you don't need Level 2 or 3 coaches, just what he calls 'champions' - passionate squash advocates who have a willingness to engage with new demographics, grow the game and promote the club.

It starts with identifying people with the right personality from the club or within the local community and upskilling them to lead sessions.

Aron advises: "Don't worry about the intricacies of teaching technique. The aim is simply to make people smile and want to come back. It's about feelings first.

"Squash players know the many benefits of playing the game and having a drink afterwards. As middle class white people, we take those benefits for granted, but other people deserve to feel them too."



SFN

©2025 SFN (Squash Facilities Network) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [Accessibility Statement](#)



SUSTAINABILITY

Aron works with each club to find ways to embed the inclusive programmes into their ways of working, so that they become permanent fixtures on their weekly calendars. "We don't want tokenistic, flash in the pan programmes that come and go," he said. "We're always talking about next steps - how can the club change to keep these people coming back? Can we train up more coaches to make it more sustainable?"

"Trying to get clubs to shift their mindset is not always easy, as you can imagine," admits Aron. "But ultimately it's a question of whether they want their club to succeed, or carry on as it's always been. It's just about getting out there, telling people your club is for everyone and finding ways to make it accessible. In order to thrive, we've got to take squash to the people."

Read more about Calder Community Squash on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X](#)