

Visit to No. 10 Downing Street



By Sadie Mason, CEO Active Sussex

October is recognised in the UK as Black History Month, and in celebration of this the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, hosted a reception at Downing Street.

My invitation to attend came perhaps as a former international basketball player, but more likely by virtue of my role as a business leader, as CEO of Active Sussex.

The 200+ attendees were typically people of Black African, and Afro-Caribbean origin who have excelled in the field of business, television, sport (community or elite) or the voluntary sector.

I rubbed shoulders with sporting stars such as Sol Campbell (former premierships footballer, and recent Conservative nominee for London Mayor) and Pamela Cookey (recently retired England Netball star and now Business Manager with the West of England CSP). Also in the room was the main architect of the Shard – I couldn't get anywhere near him!

The PM had little time to meet his guests individually, and as my trademark red jacket had spectacularly failed to get his attention, I politely but firmly extended my hand by way of introduction. Small talk ensued, before the PM asked Pamela and I how CSPs could prevent young girls (such as his 11 year old daughter) dropping out of sport completely.

I resisted the temptation to say 'make PE a statutory curricular subject', but did point him in the direction of recent Youth Insight publication and the This Girl Campaign. 'It's all about self-esteem and confidence amongst her peers Prime Minister, and providing alternative activities to the traditional fare', I said.

The PM went on to address those gathered; he talked about the Conservatives being a 'party of firsts' and included reference to Margaret Thatcher being the first female British PM. So why not a first black PM, or first black female PM...there is hope for me yet I thought!

However his message was clear: the road to success is hard, and whilst the UK may have laws to ensure people are treated equally, there is no equality without opportunity. His Government was doing all it could to support hard working people and to ensure there was opportunity for all.

Well I guess that remains to be seen, but it was nice to be recognised, good to network (a few Active Sussex business cards changed hands!) and above all to represent. I'm sure all delegates will continue to be role models in their respective sectors. #This Girl Can