



BMG Research Qualitative Report

**Information on black/minority ethnic community
groups in the East of England**

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Because people matter.

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1 Background And Methodology

BMG Research was commissioned by Menter to undertake depth interviews with minority ethnic groups across the East of England. Six target groups were identified:

- Young people aged 16-24
- Women
- Travellers
- Refugees
- People from newer communities
- Those living in rural areas

Asylum seekers were not interviewed, following advice from a voluntary sector refugee organisation as it was felt that asylum seekers might perceive participation in the survey as jeopardising their case.

The aim was to conduct eight interviews with representatives from each of these groups. In order to gain access to the groups, two methodologies were employed. Local areas were targeted depending on their ethnic profile (using 2001 Census data) and community leaders were approached in order to solicit their co-operation with identifying potential respondents to take part in the research.

The aim of the research was to gather the views of people in specific groups that MENTER feels are under-represented in BME Voluntary and Community organisations, and therefore less likely to be heard and more likely to be affected by multiple discrimination.

This would improve MENTER's information on a number of areas including opportunities, experience and needs to counteract of discrimination as well as wider social inclusion issues.

The information collected will be used to improve services provided to Black / Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in the East of England.

Discussions were held During May and July 2004 and in almost all cases interviews lasted a minimum of one hour.

2 A Note On Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves an interactive process between the researcher and those being researched. It provides a way of probing underlying attitudes and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insight into attitudes, and the reasons behind those attitudes, that could not be probed in as much depth with a structured questionnaire. Depth interviewing allows participants to share and explore their attitudes and experiences. It represents an excellent way of mapping the range and extent of these attitudes and experiences.

However, it must be remembered when interpreting these results that they are not based on quantitative statistical evidence. The findings are based on a small sample, which is designed to cover a cross-section of residents, but this should not be confused with statistical representativeness.

It should also be remembered throughout this report that we are dealing with perceptions, not facts. Participants may hold views that are based on incorrect information; these perceptions are reported here. Members of group discussion use each other as 'spring boards', generating new ideas and concepts that may not come to light in a survey or individual depth interview.

3 Executive Summary

Employment

Refugees and people from newer communities are in no doubt that they are discriminated against by most employers because of their ethnic background and stereotype image that employers have of them. Those that are working have semi or unskilled jobs.

Many Refugees (the majority interviewed were female) have childcare commitments that prevent them from entering the labour market and they say that they would consider working when their children start full-time education.

All of the interviewees in the women's group are in employment and they hold a variety of positions including English Teacher, Social Services Worker, Interpreter, Training and Employment Advisor and Drug Outreach Worker just to name a few. The majority of women interviewed have graduate to post graduate qualifications from the UK and say that their job matches the skills which they have and they report a friendly and professional working environment.

Half of the participants from the young group are currently employed as part-time Sales Assistants. They feel the work does not reflect the skills that they have but they are doing it to strengthen their CV and at the same time to finance their study. This is not uncommon among this age range.

Most young people in the newer communities and Gypsy / Traveller groups feel that they are discriminated against by most employers because of their status or ethnic background.

The largest proportion of the Gypsy / Traveller group is self-employed and work as builders and labourers. They feel extremely discriminated against by most employers and say that they are selective about the information they disclose on application.

In the majority of cases participants or their partners living in rural areas are currently in full-time employment. Half of this rural group does not report any barriers in accessing employment. Others say that the lack of English language skills does prevent them getting middle management work.

Community involvement

Many participants from the Refugee group, the Young people group, those living in rural areas and the Gypsy / Traveller group say that there are issues of them feeling isolated, being discriminated against, high crime and the use of drugs in their areas.

The Refugee group appears to be the one that is most isolated in their local community. Although they are satisfied with the area that they live in they have little or no contact with other people living in their neighbourhood.

The majority of participants from the newer communities say that they have been the subject of continuous harassment and some are extremely frightened to be living in their respective areas. These participants are in no doubt that such harassment is racially motivated.

Young people have varied views about their community with some feeling that there are issues around the high use and dealing of drugs, particularly amongst the young, tension and fights within the Asian community and others say that these issues are no more prominent than in any other major UK city.

The women's group is perhaps the most positive about their local area and the community spirit that exists. In most cases they feel the area has a mix of BME people who look after the needs of one another and there are adequate amenities. For these reasons this group feel well settled in their current area.

The Gypsy / Traveller group feel that there is resentment from the general community in their area and that they are not welcome in any part of the UK. They say that there needs to be an agency that can put their views forward when decisions are made by organisations such as the local Council or central government that affect their community.

Half of the participants from rural areas report good community cohesion and feel they are a great deal closer to their neighbours compared to when they lived in the city. Others say that they do not feel part of the community and they are often the victims of racial verbal abuse and even assaults.

Race Discrimination

Refugees, people from newer communities and women report racially motivated incidents. Due to lack of confidence in the legal system such incidents are generally not reported to official organisations. In some cases where participants did report an incident to the police they feel the authority showed lack of interest and, in their opinion, did not take the appropriate action. In some cases participants say that they were told by the police that there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against the offenders but they felt more could have been done.

Refugees and people from the newer communities group feel that in order to tackle issues of verbal and racial attacks and the lack of

interpreters, local and central government has to take a leading role and change the negative image that is portrayed by the media.

Many people from the newer communities feel that if there were a formal organisation to represent their community then such incidents could be drawn to their attention so that they can have improved understanding with the police and other similar organisations.

The young people's group does not report any race discrimination and say that they live in a multi-cultural area where they all respect each other and that race is not an issue.

Whereas, some young people who were part of the newer communities and Gypsy / Traveller groups say that they have experienced race discrimination mainly at work and within their local area from the community at large.

Travellers feel discriminated against by other community members as well as employers. They do not believe this is race related but more a prejudice towards travellers.

Half of the participants from rural areas do not report any issues regarding race discrimination either at work or in their local area. Others say that employers discriminate against them.

Access to Information, Advice and Guidance Services

Refugees and people from newer communities say that although information, advice and guidance services exist in the area they are not always easy to locate for those who lack English language skills. Many Refugees and people from newer communities are critical of the lack of interpreters in the area. Many feel that more could be done to help to bridge the gap for those who have limited English language skills.

Almost all women say that they have not accessed IAG services within the past twelve months but they and the Gypsy / Traveller group feel confident that there are an adequate number of organisations in the area.

Half of the participants from the young group have accessed information, advice and guidance services in the past twelve months and in the main are satisfied with the quality of information they received. Organisations that have been contacted include the Employment Service, specialist BME groups such as the Bangladeshi Youth League, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Careers and Housing Service at a University. Whilst others say that they are not aware of any such organisations that can assist their age group.

Gypsies / Travellers have some concerns regarding information, advice and guidance services in their area and there is reported to be a number of health issues on the unofficial site at Sandy, Beds. Here participants say that there is no or limited access to doctors, mental health organisations, welfare benefits and education.

Participants from rural areas can only access a limited number of information advice and guidance services and use, as the main source of information and advice, the Internet, Citizen Advice Bureau and organisations in their locality such as churches or charities.

4 Participant Profile

Refugees

Participants of Refugee status i.e. only those granted leave to remain in the UK were interviewed. Refugee participants have been living in the Norwich area from six months to four and a half years. The vast majority of those interviewed are female, aged between twenty-eight to forty-two and on average they have three children in the family. They have a basic, UK equivalent of secondary school education, which they gained from their respective home countries.

The group includes people from The Congo, Kosovo, Africa and Iraq. They have lived in different parts of the UK including Manchester, Newcastle-Upon Tyne and Birmingham but they find that although services in Norwich are not ideal they are a great deal better compared to other areas.

With the exception of one participant who resides in a three-bedroom house owned by a housing association, the others are living in flats with other family members.

Women

The age of this group ranges between twenty-six to fifty and they have lived in the UK most of their lives. There is a variety of ethnic backgrounds from Bangladeshi, Black African, Indian British and Pakistani. The majority have attended further and higher education and have qualifications ranging from NVQ level to degree and postgraduate level.

The majority live as an extended family and they have childcare or family commitments which they try to balance with working life.

The group says that they are well settled in the area and report a friendly community cohesion.

People from Newer Communities

The majority of this group is Portuguese, whilst others are from Russia and Africa. Most people have been in the UK for at least two years and they live either with family or friends in rented accommodation. They are aged between twenty-one to their mid-forties.

Although some have undertaken ESOL classes here in the UK, the majority hold qualifications from their respective home country which they say are not recognised by employers here.

In their respective countries their employment status ranged from Science and Engineering Consultant to Television presenter and Journalist. However, here in the UK the majority are employed in factories as Bakers, Cleaners and General Assembly Line Workers.

Young People

The majority of this group are from Luton and Bedford and aged sixteen to twenty-four. There is almost an equal number of male and female participants from a mix of ethnic groups from Black Caribbean, African, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese. The vast majority of this group is in full-time education and some work part-time in order to fund their study.

They are currently living with their parents and they have lived in the area most of their lives.

Gypsy / Traveller

The Gypsy / Traveller group stays at official and unofficial sites in the East of England. They are aged from twenty to fifty-two. They all have childcare commitments and say that they have a 'close family unit' on the sites.

The overwhelming majority says that they are not able to read or write English as fluently as they would like which is their biggest barrier when it comes to accessing employment opportunities.

This group has a number of issues from being discriminated against by employers, to not being able to see a GP when required and being portrayed in a negative way by the media.

Rural Communities

Those living in rural areas have lived there from four months to four years. For some, the reason for living in a rural area was a conscious choice to move away from city life or for a quieter life with less traffic; others were driven by work commitments. Others (approximately half) have immigrated from other countries such as Brazil, Hong Kong and Portugal. The main reason for them living in rural areas is because they were guaranteed employment in these localities by agencies based in their respective home countries. Almost all participants are married and have between one and three children.

5 Current Employment

Refugees

In the vast majority of cases this group is currently out of work. Some say that family commitments prevent them from entering the labour market. Even if there were suitable childcare facilities available in the area this group says that it would be unlikely that they would consider working. There is also a perception among this group that they are discriminated against by most employers.

'I have three children so I can't leave them at home alone so I will wait until they start school and then maybe I can work.'

'I don't trust anyone else to look after my children.'

'I'm not working in a paid job but I do voluntary work on the Refugee project which is part of the Red Cross. I've not been able to find work because employers do not see us in a good way. They think we will steal things or something.'

Half of the participants say that they were in employment while they were in their respective home countries. The occupations ranged from sales assistant, bar person, classroom assistant and computer programmer.

'I had my family there so they could look after my children and I could work part-time but here I have no one.'

'I can not find any work and I had a nice job in Congo.'

In most cases this group has limited English language skills and they recognise that this may be a major barrier because they feel less confident working in an environment where they may have direct customer contact.

Women

Here the majority of participants are in employment and they hold a variety of positions including English teacher, social services worker, interpreter, training and employment advisor and drug outreach worker just to name a few. With the exception of one participant, all others feel that their job matches the skills they have. In their current role the vast majority specialise in providing a service to other BME ethnic minority people and says that 'job satisfaction' is the main reason for them working in such roles. The vast majority found out about their current jobs via newspapers, word of mouth, university advertisements or internal company advertisements.

'The good points are that there is a lot of job satisfaction working within the community and I can understand and acknowledge the cultural barriers so I feel I am probably one of the best people to do the job.'

'Because of my Asian background I can understand the needs better.'

'It's aimed at Asian communities and in helping Asian women and families and I can relate to their concerns.'

Almost all participants report a friendly and professional work environment, have good relations with their employer, and do not report any discrimination or prejudice. However, one respondent feels that on occasions BME people and in particular women are overlooked when companies are considering promoting their staff.

'I find it is the culture of the organisation that they have no acceptance of diversity. I would say most senior and management positions are helped to by white people and the juniors are ethnic minority, who find that white people that start in the same position as them go up the ladder past them.'

One participant says that due to cultural and community pressures she had to justify working and going to university. All other participants do not report any such barriers and say that they have the support of their family for the work that they do.

'Things that prevent me doing my job is... my community. It has been a struggle. I was the first girl in my family to go to University and my extended family feels that the role of females is to be in the kitchen. I never did anything wrong and my dad was the only one fighting in my corner. Even if a better job came up [outside of Luton] my immediate and extended family would not like to see me leave the Luton area.'

People from Newer Communities

Half of the participants are currently unemployed and finding it extremely difficult to enter the labour market. Those that have gained professional qualifications in their respective countries say that such qualifications are not recognised by employers in the UK. In the UK many of these participants have worked in jobs that are less skilled and outside of their profession.

'I can't get work. I used to be a TV presenter and Journalist in Russia but here nothing. I have worked in a factory just to pay the bills but I will never find the same work here.'

'I don't work and I can't get work. The only work available for me is factory work.'

'I have a fork lift truck licence from Portugal but they don't use it here.'

Almost all participants feel that they are discriminated against by employers because of their ethnic background. Some report being racially harassed in their previous jobs.

'...but in some factories you get questioned by other people like 'Why are you here? You and your people come to England to get benefits and take our jobs.'

'They only give us factory jobs because the English people don't want to do them. I could do better work but I can't get it.'

Almost all participants say the lack of English language skills is also a factor for them either not finding employment or being employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

'I know English is a problem. Ninety percent of Portuguese people are not able to speak English and that is a problem.'

'There are lots of problems... language and my family is not integrated into the UK like they should be.'

Participants who are employed all work as Assemblers, Packers, Cleaners and Bakers. In all cases they are employed via employment agencies and feel that this is their best route to securing employment.

'It's easier to find work through an agency because employers don't see us and they only see us when we start so they can't discriminate against us.'

'I went to a company straight [direct] and I didn't get the job but the agency sent me [to the same company] and there wasn't a problem.'

Young People

Here half of the participants are currently employed as part-time sales assistants. They feel the work does not reflect the skills that they have but they are doing it to strengthen their CV and at the same time to finance their study. They say that because they are looking for evening and weekend work to complement their study hours the only roles available are within the sales field.

Others say that they are not looking for employment as it may distract them from their study. Some of these participants have had summer jobs, which have again mainly been in a sales capacity.

The group does not report any negative aspects of their companies and feel that they are generally well treated by their employers.

Some young people from the Gypsy / Traveller group say that they find it a real challenge to find work. They feel that many employers have a perception that this group is not hard working and they are not prepared to give them an opportunity to prove themselves.

'We dare not let them [employers] know we are Travellers... the first thing they think of is that we are going to steal and a barrier goes up.'

Young people from the newer communities group feel that they are also discriminated against by most employers because of their ethnic background.

Gypsies / Travellers

Here some participants are self-employed and work as builders and labourers. They feel heavily discriminated against by most employers

and say that people generally have a negative image of the travelling community.

'We are targeted against and discriminated against... we have to hide our identity.'

'I work on the side like most of us because we can't get official work.'

'We are made an outcast by all employers.'

Participants give numerous examples of when employers have discriminated against them and now they either work as self-employed persons or they are selective about the information they disclose on application forms.

'My daughter just couldn't get a job when she was being truthful on applications. So eventually she used a friend's address [as compared to an unofficial campsite address] and she got a job straight away. So what does that tell you?'

'I had a job in a supermarket when I didn't tell them I was a Traveller. I was on holiday for two days and went back and some how they found out... and they sacked me.'

'We just don't say we're Gypsies anymore.'

The group says that they appreciate that they do not have the necessary skills for supervisory or managerial positions and they are prepared to work in lower skilled jobs but even then they are not given an opportunity by employers.

Rural Communities

In almost all cases participants or their partners are currently in full-time employment. Some are currently taking a career break due to childcare commitments and they feel that it would be relatively easy to gain employment if they so desired. The group does not report any barriers in accessing employment.

'Jobs are not a problem. The distance may be. I have worked for xxxx so it did involve travelling but when you live in a village you accept that. So there is no problem.'

Although there are no barriers to accessing employment half the group feel that they are heavily discriminated against by most employers and are only offered either unskilled or semi-skilled work.

'Majority are racist . . . all levels from boss down.'

'There is no chance of promotion because of who we are.'

Further to this, half of the group says that due to a lack of English language skills it makes it increasingly difficult for them to access middle management jobs.

'Most of us don't speak English and that makes it hard.'

'It is true employers want people who are fluent in English.'

Whilst half of this group does not report any issues with wage rates others say that they are poorly paid and taken advantage of by many employers and other organisations.

'Some agencies are paying three pound an hour.'

'It's because they know we are desperate for work and that we won't argue.'

'Some agencies are not paying holidays... again they know we are not going to make a fuss.'

6 Community Involvement

Refugees

Of all the groups Refugees appear to be the ones that are most isolated in their community. Although they are satisfied with the area that they live in they have little or no contact with other people in the neighbourhood. In almost all cases participants report low crime and a pleasant environment but they still feel uncertain and vulnerable to attacks.

'No one makes an effort to talk to you. You feel you are being watched. I don't even know my neighbours.'

'There's not much communication... may be sometimes a 'hello' and that's it.'

'We don't have break-ins but you don't know when something might happen because of who you are.'

Participants say that although there are local organisations to help their community they are not as well known and / or have limited opening times.

'I'm a member of the Norwich Refugee group and the Norfolk African Community Association but I had to go out of my way and ask a lot of questions to find out about them. Most people don't ask or search for things like I do.'

'We just meet here once a week and this is the only place [The Friends Meeting House, Norwich]....I found out about them through a friend who comes here.'

The vast majority feels that greater effort needs to be made to help this group integrate with the rest of the community and this should be done in partnership with government organisations.

'There is very little help. You are left to find out for yourself. The government should be doing more.'

Women

This group is perhaps the most positive about their local area and the community spirit that exists. In most cases they feel the area has a mix of BME people who look after the needs of one another and there are adequate amenities. For these reasons this group feels far more settled in their current area.

'There is a good community spirit. It's a diverse area where there are Whites, Asians, Sikh Punjabis and Hindu Gujeratis and there are a few Pakistanis and it's great. Never a problem.' 'I've got no concerns about living in the area, the town centre is only two miles away and I've got everything close by.'

'There are lots of ethnic groups and there is a mix including people from Zimbabwe and Ghana and Asians. I feel safe in the area and I feel safe walking around at night. It's nice to know other Muslims are around and that they will be there to help you.'

'I'm satisfied with the area. Crime is not that high, it's a good neighbourhood and the local school is one of the best in the area. It's nice and safe.'

All participants say that there are a sufficient number of local organisations that cater for their community needs. Three quarters of the group or their families access services from such organisations but due to time constraints very few are members of these organisations.

'I'm involved in the Luton All Women's Centre and I sit in for the support team.'

'There is CYCD [Centre for Youth and Community Development] where there is adult education, youth clubs for boys and girls and it definitely meets my needs but it meets the needs of the community, as there are lots of people that access the centre so it must be doing something right.'

'I feel that they meet my needs and they meet the needs of the community, as there are lots of people that access the centre. So we have enough here.'

People from Newer Communities

A quarter of participants say that they are satisfied with the area where they live. They have a strong community spirit and have never experienced any difficulties with neighbours. They visit one another's homes and are invited to various cultural and religious festivals.

'I've been here three years and never, never, never had a problem. They are all very nice. We get on very well. They come to my house and I go to theirs. They treat us like a family.'

'No, no problems at all. We look after each other.'

On the other hand the rest of the participants, the majority, say that they have been the subject of continuous harassment and some are extremely frightened to be living in their respective areas. These participants are in no doubt that such harassment is racially motivated.

'I've been called all sorts of names and it happens several times. They have broken my car windows and they throw stones at my house. It has to be racial because why is it only me they do it to on the road?'

'I walk past children and they call me names and they break my car windows.'

'We have kids knocking my door at two, three o'clock in the morning and they run off and they shout [verbal abuse] from the street.'

All participants say that there are no formal organisations within their area that represent their community and it is something that they feel is needed. Some people have set up less formal discussion forums and they meet on an ad-hoc basis to offer moral support to one another and where necessary report incidents to the police.

'I tried to get one [setting up a formal organisation] nine months ago through the Council but it didn't work. They didn't come back to me. I gave them a five year plan of how people would benefit but they were not interested.'

'We don't have anything formal but we do know the Jewish community here and every so often we invite them to our house to discuss any problems and I then put them to the police. But if you said a formal organisation then yes definitely that is what we need.'

Young People

Here the findings are varied for those living in Luton and others who are from Bedford. Although at first all participants from the Luton area say that they are satisfied with their area and that there is a strong community spirit they go on to point out a number of negatives and feel that more should be done to improve the area. Such negatives include:

- High use and dealing of drugs, particularly amongst the young.
- Lack of activities for the young, such as with youth centres etc.
- High levels of crime, assaults, house and car break-ins.

'There is a lot of community spirit in the area there's no problem with that. The problems are the youth that stand around abusing drugs...'

'There is a good community spirit but it can be a bad thing as well and it causes fights between Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. I've been involved in fights with groups because I stick up for my friends and if they get into trouble I'll help out.'

Those from Bedford say that there is a strong community spirit and the problems with alcohol and/or drugs are no worse than any other major city. They do not feel there is any tension within the community and in general they all get on reasonably well with each other.

Half of the participants from Luton say that they are members of youth organisations.

'I'm a member of the Bangladeshi Youth League. I became a member three years ago and I do voluntary work. Yes it meets all my needs.'

'We have the CYCD centre [Centre for Youth and Community Development] and that has received a lot of grants and it has professionals working in there. There is also a purpose built sports centre with a swimming pool and they do women only classes.'

Those participants from Bedford have different views and say that they are not aware of any organisation in their area that represents or offers a service for BME people. Here there is no doubt that they would like to see increased sports and leisure facilities for young people.

'There isn't anything for ethnic minority people here.'

'We haven't got clubs or an organisation for Black people.'

'It does seem as if they are not bothered about Bedford and they are only interested in investing money in Milton Keynes. Everything has gone there and this is like a ghost town. If we want to do anything then we have to go to Milton Keynes.'

'...Black organisation to set up and arrange trips, sports facilities, a Black football team and education classes is what we need.'

Some young people from the newer community and Gypsy / Traveller groups say that they feel isolated within their local area and they have little or no contact with others in their neighbourhood.

Gypsies / Travellers

The group feels that there is resentment from the general community towards Gypsies / Travellers and that they are not welcome in any area of the UK. Some participants have been on the same site for over seven years and although things are far from being ideal, in a small way they are starting to gain the trust of the local community.

'Where ever we go we would have to prove that we are not here to make a mess or cause trouble and here it's taken us seven years. The local newspapers have only just started to print our side of the story. I'm not saying we haven't got issues but we are moving in the right direction.'

The group feels isolated and under-represented in the community. They say that there needs to be an organisation that can put their views forward at a decision-making level.

'We've set up a National Travellers Action Group [NTAG] to try to get basic rights for ourselves but if you say there could be bigger and better organisations then that is what we need.'

'We're not listened to by anyone.'

Some participants are keen to work with an official organisation to promote their community in a positive light and to start a dialogue with other community members in order to improve relations.

Rural Communities

Half of the participants report good community cohesion and feel they are a great deal closer to their neighbours compared to when they lived in the city. Some say that their local Church helps to maintain that close bond by holding gatherings and other social events. The group does not feel the need to have any further organisations or community groups in their area.

'Firstly, we know each other here whereas in the city it's a case of who are you? It's a good spirit and we look out for each other.'

'I've lived in Middlesex, Bristol and Germany but this is the most friendly place.'

Others feel that although they are satisfied with the area where they live there is a real lack of community cohesion and they feel isolated and are often racially verbally abused and some even assaulted.

'A company here is known to be racist and I was involved in a fight in their café once because someone kept calling me names.'

'I live in fear even in the day. I've had stones thrown at me.'

*'I've been picked on because some kids walked past me and a friend
and heard us talking in a different language.'*

These participants are dependant on local charities, the Church and the
Citizen Advice Bureau [CAB] for help and support.

'We come here [local Church] to talk through our problems.'

*'If it wasn't for this place [local Church] I would not know where to
go.'*

'The CAB are very good in helping as well.'

7 Race Discrimination

Refugees

Although earlier in the discussion some participants report low levels of general crime, when they are asked about racially motivated attacks the picture is somewhat different. In almost all cases either participants or people that they know have been the subject of verbal abuse or direct attacks.

'I know women who cover themselves [with the Islamic headscarf] who have been attacked for no reason but for the way they look.'

'I don't think there is a problem.....my son has had problems in school by being called names about his religion and all that but I don't know if that is just kids or it's because of a colour thing.'

'Yes only one month ago I went to the supermarket and a man approached me and asked if I was an asylum seeker and he said because I was in his country he had to know.'

In most cases participants say that apart from talking to their friends and family they do not report such incidents to official organisations. They feel that this is something they have to accept and is less threatening than what they had to face recently in their respective home countries.

'Of course you feel bad but what can you do? You have to ignore it and move on. Back home you could get killed so it's better than that isn't it?'

One participant who did report an incident to the police feels it should have been better handled and because of that he would be less likely to report it in the future.

'I called the police when I was approached by this man in the street. They asked me if he was still there and I told them he was walking away and they said they would send someone but they didn't take my name, address or anything and no one showed. I felt angry and sad.....thinking I came here to be free but this is very sad. I ask myself why did the police not follow it up?'

Women

Half of the participants have not encountered any forms of racism either at work or in their daily lives and they feel confident about living in their area. The other half have experienced racism in a work environment but have not been victims of an attack.

'There is discrimination, especially in employment where you can apply for a job but the company will have already selected internally for the position.'

'I've worked for five authorities and I've felt it a lot. Society is class ridden but also it has low underlying racism and low level of discrimination. I've seen it both on a professional and personal level. For example when the housing office I was working for received a petition from local residents, who were all White, saying that the housing couldn't be given to Pakis and Nig Nogs as they were dirty.'

The vast majority of cases have not been reported to the police or their employer as participants feel that they may be told that there was insufficient evidence. In one case where the participant did report an incident to the police she felt that they showed lack of interest and no action was taken.

People from Newer Communities

As discussed earlier the vast majority of participants have experienced discrimination either at work or within their local area. One person has been a victim of a racial attack. The vast majority of cases are not reported to the police as many feel that the police will not take any positive steps to find the perpetrators.

Where incidents have been reported to the police the victims feel that more should have been done to follow up their case.

'We know who does it and we've told the police but they just come back and say there's no evidence.'

'When they broke my car windows I called the police and they came may be four or five hours later and they just took a statement and left. No one has contacted us again. They should help us more.'

Many feel that if there were a formal organisation to represent their community then such incidents could be brought to their attention so that they can be better followed up.

'You see if I could go to an organisation and say that the police are not doing anything then there is a chance that the police will be feel pressurised to follow up cases.'

Young People

Almost all participants do not report any race discrimination and say that they live in a multi-cultural area where they all respect each other and that race is not an issue.

'Where I live there is a mix of African, Jamaican, Chinese, English, Pakistani and everyone and we get on. May be all young people get discriminated against but that's probably because of their age rather than colour.'

Participants from the newer community group have different views on this and they say that they have experienced race discrimination at work and within their local area.

Young people in the Gypsy / Traveller group also say that they face discrimination on a daily basis from employers and within their local area from the community at large.

Gypsies / Travellers

As discussed earlier all participants feel discriminated against by the community at large as well as employers. They do not believe this is race related by but more a prejudice towards travellers.

Participants have not reported any such incidents to the police or other official organisations as they have little confidence in the legal system.

'Who do you report it to? The police and what are they going to do? I'd be wasting my time and theirs.'

'I could have reported my boss but where would you go and would they listen to you? I don't think so. These people just talk a good game but they can't help us or they don't want to help us.'

Rural Communities

Half of the group does not report any issues regarding race discrimination either at work or in their local area. As discussed earlier others say that employers discriminate against them and that they have been racially attacked. These participants say that there is a lack of understanding and support from the police. In the vast majority of cases such incidents are not reported to the police but where they are some in the group feel that their case has not been investigated as they had hoped.

'The police have made no effort. They don't follow up your report and they don't even provide an interpreter.'

'I don't think the police are racist. They just don't have an understanding of our needs.'

'I didn't report mine because I knew the police wouldn't do anything.'

8 Access to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Services

Refugees

Participants say that although IAG services exist in the area they are not always easy to locate for those who do not have English language skills. The group feels that there needs to be procedures where Refugees are informed about such services when they enter the UK and they are not left to find out for themselves.

'They need to have something . . . and may be when you arrive at immigration they could give you a list of services that are available. A lot of times we only find out from friends [through word of mouth].'

The group is generally satisfied with the quality of housing, GPs, schools and the legal service. This is much to do with the pro-active approach taken by some housing associations.

'Doctors are very helpful. They see you when you need them.'

'The housing association provides us with a notice board and this gives you a list of doctors, dentists, schools, colleges, phone number for the British Red Cross and legal services.... This was put up in the house before I came here. So that is very good. In that way they look after you.'

One participant is in no doubt that the two main issues are the quality of housing and having to share accommodation with people from varied religious beliefs, nationalities and interests. Although this situation has now been resolved he feels that it affects a number of Refugees.

'I had a house to share with thirteen people and it was six to a bedroom and I lived like that for five months till they found a new house for me. That is very hard because you have to share with people from different religions and you might not eat what they eat and it becomes a problem.'

One aspect where there is some criticism is with the lack of interpreters in the area. Many feel that more could be done to help to bridge the gap for those who have limited English language skills.

'There are no translators. If you speak English there's no problem but if you don't there is no help. Simple things like going to see a doctor then become a big problem.'

Women

Only one participant says that she has accessed IAG services within the past twelve months. All others say that they have not had a need but they feel confident that they know where to access such information.

'I had to get advice from the Local Education Authority as my daughter is about to start Secondary school and the ones she has applied to have rejected her. The authority tried their best to help.'

'I've not had a need but it's the usual places like doctors, Internet, my boss if it was work related and so on that I would go to.'

People from Newer Communities

All participants feel there are adequate IAG services in their area. However, they say that for those who are not able to communicate in English then it is a real problem. The lack of Portuguese translators is said to be the single biggest issue.

'We use each other. So if someone wants to go to the Doctor and they can't speak English they will take a person from the community and that person will want five or ten pounds to go with them and that is how some people make their money.'

'The police don't have a translator. I've been arrested and asked to see one. I can speak English, but I don't know the law language and thought it would be better to get a translator but they couldn't find one.'

There are not reported to be any problems with accessing information for GPs, schools, benefit agencies or any other such service providing the person is able to communicate in English.

'No all services are good if you speak English. No problem but if you don't then you have big problem.'

Young People

Half of the participants have accessed IAG services in the past twelve months and in the main are satisfied with the quality of information they received.

'It's just easy to see someone at the BYL [Bangladeshi Youth League] because I go there.'

'They gave good advice about careers. There are no problems.'

The other participants say that they are not aware of any organisations in the area that can provide information on issues about housing, health and Careers.

'If they are there I don't know of them. Maybe they need to do more advertising.'

Gypsies / Travellers

Almost all agree that there are sufficient IAG services available for them. However, they very much feel that is not always followed up with positive actions.

'What information? There is enough talk out there but no one is interested in helping.'

'They talk and talk and do nothing. They are all in it for themselves and when it comes to doing they run-I'll give an example- they'll tell us about doctors in the area but when you go to a doctor and he refuses to see you because you haven't got a permanent address, then where is the help? You tell me.'

The group is in no doubt that issues affecting their community have been getting worse in recent times and say that there is no consultation when policies are developed.

Some participants have been in dialogue with the local Council but they feel that they have not been listened to. Many say that Councils need to take a leading role in improving the living standard for their community. This group is perhaps the most enthusiastic to get involved in helping to make that change. They say that all too often they are pushed to one side and if there were an opportunity to be involved at a strategic level then they would not hesitate to join.

'We have made the effort to talk to the Council. They weren't interested and it's taken us seven years to get them to come here and listen to what we have to say but it's slow.'

There are reported to be a number of health issues on the unofficial site at Sandy, Beds. Here participants say that there are no or limited access to doctors, mental health organisations, welfare benefits and education.

'We don't have a doctor and because ours is not an official site we can't even claim benefit because we can't register a permanent address. Say if you went to see your parents in Manchester, you wanted to see a doctor you could see one without a problem, but for us we have been on this site for seven years, and we still can't see a doctor when we want. They say you don't have a permanent address.'

'...because we travel our children can't get into schools. You find schools won't take our kids. So what are they going to do when they grow up? They won't be able to read or write as well and it'll keep going round.'

In order to improve the current situation the group gives a number of recommendations. These include:

- Better recognition of the travelling community by official organisations.
- Greater consultation with community members.
- An official site in every major city of the UK.

Rural Communities

These participants have not accessed any IAG services within the past twelve months. Although some say that there is a lack of dentists and banks in their area they accept that not all amenities will be available in rural areas.

'Yes we could do with a dentist but then I could go and live in Cambridge. Which of the two do I want?'

For some participants the internet has become the main source of information and advice and they rely solely on this rather than visiting organisations.

'Internet for me. It's quick and easy. I don't need the library or job centre it's all on the net.'

In half of the cases this group has access to information and advice via the CAB and local charities and the Church. Throughout the discussion such organisations are praised for their efforts in helping this group.

9 Other Issues

Refugees

Participants are in no doubt that the reason for racial harassment of refugees is because they are perceived to be taking advantage of the benefits system in the UK. The group is critical of both local and national media and the government for the way Refugees and Asylum seekers are portrayed.

'All these problems are because of what the papers say and people believe them.'

'The government does not help when they print figures for Refugees and say we are taking their jobs.'

The group feels that in order to tackle these issues the government has to take a leading role and change the negative images that are portrayed by the media. At the same time they have lost faith in some central government policies and feel that the situation can not be improved. Many feel that the same issues exist throughout the UK for Refugees and Asylum seekers.

'It's the same all over. Everyone thinks the government is telling the truth.'

'They [government] have to change their views and then maybe the media will favour us. Otherwise no.'

The group feels that additional assistance should be available when Council homes are offered. They say that many properties require decorating, furniture and carpets and this group does not have the financial power to take on such costs.

Women

The group reports no issues with travel and they all have access to private transport. They also do not have any language barriers and they are all fluent in English. Almost all participants say that they are satisfied with the healthcare provisions in the area and they have not experienced any difficulties in accessing such services or information. One person does say that she prefers to see a female GP but at present that service is not available at her surgery and changing to another practice is proving difficult.

'It was fine before when I had a female doctor but since this new Asian male doctor has come in I feel he has no clue. There is no option to see a female doctor. I speak to other women and they feel the same way.'

Half of the group has childcare commitments and at present they use informal ways to meet their needs. This is said to be the safest and most cost effective method. Most participants have not heard of Sure Start and are not aware of the services that they provide.

'My friend picks them up from school and we collect them when we finish work.'

'I get my family to help out.'

'... it is very expensive and the government should be paying for schemes where females can leave their children.'

Almost all participants access local leisure facilities including cinemas, swimming baths and libraries. They say that they are satisfied with the current provisions and that they have noticed an improvement in recent times.

'I take them [children] out swimming to the cinema and bowling. They attend Church on Saturday.'

'Since the Galaxy has been there it has been much better.'

'I go two or three times a week to the gym and it is fine. I have no problems with it.'

Although earlier participants say that they are satisfied with the current IAG services to meet their own needs, they feel that more could be done to help certain other groups. Such as:

- Male and females who are forced into marriages.
- Increased resources to tackle drugs within the Asian community.
- Further assistance for those who are disabled or need mental health support.

People from Newer Communities

A quarter of participants say that there is a lack of kosher butchers in their local area and they have to travel to either Birmingham or London bi-monthly to undertake such shopping. They feel that there is a sufficient Jewish community in the area to warrant such a service locally.

Young People

Half of the group reports no issues around discrimination or prejudice in their present or past school. However, others say that they were targeted by some teachers and feel that it was because of their ethnic background.

'You do sometimes feel that the teachers watch you more because you are Black. But what can you do? It happens everywhere.'

All participants say that their school has given them adequate help and advice about options such as training, employment and further education opportunities. Very few have heard of Connexions and most are not sure about the services provided by this organisation.

Almost all participants have aspirations to go onto higher education and go into professional occupations such as a Teacher, Criminologist, Interior Designer and Chartered Accountant.

Gypsies / Travellers

All participants feel that they are portrayed in a negative light by the media and are not offered the opportunity to discuss their issues with local Councils. They say that by improved communication other community members may begin to appreciate their way of life.

'We've only achieved this after seven years but people here are more friendly than they first were because they now understand that we don't all cause a mess and we don't all smell and steal.'

'If we can put that message across to people then we can all live together.'

Rural Communities

Although all participants have access to private transport and do not report any issues with travelling they do feel that there needs to be greater emphasis on public transport for those who may not be as fortunate.

'I've got a car so it's fine. But I can see it being a problem for some because the nearest dentist is two villages away and if you have to go on a bus then it can be a problem.'

Some participants feel that charges on the park and ride scheme do not warrant them using this service and in many cases they travel to Cambridge by car.

'I have to drive seventy-five percent of the way [to Cambridge] and then the park and ride starts. The cost of the bus is the same, as the parking charges so why not just drive all the way?'

Participants praise the leisure facilities however they feel that there needs to be greater promotion of such service to rise the general awareness of their community.

'More information about what they offer and may be more people would use them.'

10 Appendix

Menter BME Research Depth Interviews Topic guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. This interview will take between one and two hours.

My name is XXXXXXXXXX and I am an independent researcher from BMG Research

The aim of this important research project is to gather the views of people from minority ethnic communities on a number of issues regarding their opportunities, needs and experience of discrimination as well as wider social inclusion issues. .

The information collected will be used to improve services provided to minority ethnic groups in the East of England.

EXPLAIN CONFIDENTIALITY AND MICROPHONE. SEEK PERMISSION TO RECORD.

Stress BMG is not a government organisation; we are completely independent. That means that everything you say to us is treated confidentially and your personal details will not be passed on to anybody.

Warm up / profile

First of all, perhaps you could tell me a bit about yourself, how do you define your ethnic background?

What languages are you able to speak and / or write?

How long have you lived in the East of England? Where do you live now and how did you come to live in this place

How would you describe your community and/or religious background?

What is your approximate age?

Current employment

Are you currently employed? Is this part time or full time? What does the organisation you work for do? What do you think of the work that you do, what are the good points and bad points of your present job? What are the working conditions like? How did you find out about the job? PROBE for informal or formal networks used. PROBE around whether this job matches their skills/abilities, is it what they want to do? PROBE for what job would they like to have and what prevents them from doing this job.

If you are not currently working, how long has it been since you were last in paid employment? What did you mainly do in your job? Do you wish to return to work? If yes, when? What sort of job are you looking for and why? PROBE for occupation and industry.

What is preventing you from accessing employment? (If necessary prompt for language barriers, cultural issues, childcare, wage rates, cost, education and training, Information Advice and Guidance provision, location, education, work experience, discrimination, any others?)

Community Involvement and the local area

Are you generally satisfied with the area you live in as a place to live? Why/why not?

Do you feel that there is a good community spirit in your local area? Why/why not?

Do you have any concerns about living in your local area? If so, what are they?

Is there an organisation for your community? If not, do you feel there is a need and what is that need?

If there is are you a member?

If you are, do you feel it meets your needs? If you are not, please give reasons.

Do you play an active part in any other local community groups or organisations? If not, why not? If yes, which ones are you associated with and why? PROBE for cultural, religious or other links.

Race discrimination

Have you experienced discrimination because of your racial origin? If yes, from whom and what kind of discrimination?

Have you been a victim of racist attack? If yes, did you report this?

If you reported this how did you feel it was dealt with? If you did not report this, please give reasons?

Access to IAG services

Read out: I would now like to ask you some questions regarding local services.

With regard to your health, job, housing, education or any other issue important to you have you received any information, advice or guidance from any organisations or people over the past 12 months? (PROMPT for benefits agencies, colleges, friends, social services, schools, libraries, GP's, health visitors, family planning clinic etc). How was this experience?

If you had a problem regarding your health, job, housing, education or any other issue important to you, who would you approach first? PROBE for reasons why?

If respondent would use informal sources, (i.e. friends/family) explore reasons. What would make them more likely to use formal IAG services?

How easy is it for you to get adequate advice about issues when you need it? What do you think are the main difficulties you experience when accessing information and guidance?

The following sections should only be asked of the relevant groups (bear in mind that one respondent may fall into more than one group). Once all appropriate sections have been asked, ask questions in section 8.

Refugees

Country of origin, Did you know anyone in the UK before you arrived? Did you speak English before you arrived? If no, are you learning English and if you are, does this class meet your needs? If it does not meet your needs please say why? What was your last occupation before coming to the UK?

(Additional question on employment)

If your present occupation does not match with your previous occupation or is not the job of your choice, what has prevented you from getting there?

Are you interested in career development and what do you feel would help with this?

If you are not in paid work, are you on a training course? If no, do you feel you need training? If yes, please specify and say how it would meet your needs?

If you are not in paid work do you do voluntary work and what do you think of this?

Have you found it easy to get interpretation / translation services if you needed it?

If you used them what did you think of these services?

NB. There are no specific questions on immigration advisory services because of the sensitivity –these interviews should be with those who have been granted refugee status. Immigration issues may come up in the interview and will then be considered. Asylum seekers' issues will be picked up through MENTER links e.g. the Voluntary Sector Refugee Network

Women

Do you have any difficulties with travel? How does this affect you in your daily life. What are you prevented from doing? Do you experience any language issues in your day to day life?

Regarding health care – are you satisfied with this, do you get the same gender GP if you want this? Do you have any difficulties accessing information on healthcare (incl. mental health)?

Do you use childcare (formal or informal)? If so what sort; how often? If not would it be useful? – How... what would it allow you to do? Do you know about programmes like Sure Start? Do you have care responsibilities? If so, for whom? (elderly, children, disabled)

What are the main issues (especially if care is being given to frail elderly or severely disabled). Do you have a support network outside their family (is this formal / informal)?

Do you feel you have equal access to opportunities in employment or training? If not, why not?

Are there cultural, community, or family pressures that influence your employment prospects?

Do you use local leisure facilities? What sorts of facilities? How satisfied are you with the provision of leisure facilities locally. What could be done to improve them? Have you experienced any problems accessing local leisure facilities?

Young People

What was your experience of school like? Did you experience any kind of prejudice/discrimination at schools? Describe...

How aware are you of the options available to young people (regards employment/ training/ etc) Where would you go for information advice or guidance about education or employment opportunities? Have you heard of Connexions? Have you used it?

If respondent would use informal sources, (i.e. friends/family) explore reasons. What would make them more likely to use formal IAG services?

What employment aspirations do you have? Can you achieve these locally? Why not? Do you think there are problems with substance abuse locally (drugs, alcohol, etc)? Does this affect you? How?

Do you use local leisure facilities? What sorts of facilities? How satisfied are you with the provision of leisure facilities locally. What could be done to improve them? Have you experienced any problems accessing local leisure facilities?

Do you feel you are treated unfairly by the police? Examples. (If necessary, explore in the third person i.e. friends and acquaintances)

How do you think this could be resolved?

Gypsies/Travellers

Do you have any problems finding sites? Does lack of sites affect your culture / tradition?

How easy do you find it to access education/ training? Are any steps taken to accommodate this?

How important is the protection of your culture/traditions to you? Does this cause any problems in your daily life?

How easy is it for you to access employment? Are any steps taken to accommodate this? Do you use local leisure facilities? What sorts of facilities?

How satisfied are you with the provision of leisure facilities locally. What could be done to improve them? Have you experienced any problems accessing local leisure facilities?

Do you feel you are treated unfairly by the agencies such as housing or the police? Examples. (If necessary, explore in the third person i.e. friends and acquaintances) How do you think this could be resolved?

People in Rural Communities

Do you have any difficulties with access to transport? How does this affect you in your daily life. What are you prevented from doing?

Do you have problems accessing other services (e.g. GP, dentist, shops, bank, council services, etc)?

How does this impact on your daily life? Do you have difficulty finding specialist services e.g. particular foods or religious establishments?

Is there greater isolation living in the country than you would have in a more urban area? If yes, what effect does this have and what could be done about it?

Are there migrant, temporary workers in this area? What is the impact and what would you like to see done?

How easy do you find it to access education/ training? Are any steps taken to accommodate this? How easy is it for you to access employment? Are any steps taken to accommodate this?

Do you have any difficulties accessing cultural requirements (e.g. special foods, etc)? How does this affect you?

Do you use local leisure facilities? What sorts of facilities?

How satisfied are you with the provision of leisure facilities locally. What could be done to improve them? Have you experienced any problems accessing local leisure facilities?

Are there any other issues that affect your life as a result of living in a rural community?

People from Newer Communities (i.e. not classified as African, Caribbean, Asian or Chinese)

Do you think there is a need for cultural organisations within your community?

What functions do you see such a group(s) fulfilling? How do you think this would impact on the community and others?

Do you have any difficulties accessing cultural requirements (e.g. special foods, etc)? How does this affect you?

Do you feel there is less understanding of your culture and traditions than there is for some of the older communities?

Is there more discrimination because of this?

Is there greater isolation? – if yes, what effect does this have and what could be done about it?

Miscellaneous – to be asked for all groups

Is there anything not mentioned in this questionnaire that you see as a need for further support (all groups to be asked this)? Do you have any other comments?