

Moving Towards Inclusion

A Picture of Disadvantage in the South West

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An overview

The report, *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal*, (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2000), acts as a summary of all the issues raised in SEU reports as they specifically affect minority ethnic communities in Britain. The SEU acknowledges the lack of official data on minority ethnic communities, but states:

'... the available data confirms that some groups experience disproportionate disadvantage across the board and others experience it in other areas'

According to the report, people from minority ethnic communities are more likely to:

- live in deprived areas;
- be poor;
- be unemployed compared to white people similarly qualified;
- suffer ill-health;
- live in unpopular and overcrowded housing;
- experience racial harassment and discrimination;
- be over-represented in the criminal justice system.

There is little doubt that racial discrimination is a significant factor in the levels of disadvantage experienced by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.

Of all the European Social Fund (ESF) beneficiary groups examined for the purposes of rewriting the 1998 TEC reports, it is the one relating to BME Communities that most desperately cries out for updating. So much has happened in terms of policy and practice over the past decade that to utilise data from the 1991 Census, so heavily relied upon in that report, would be irresponsible.

Just prior to publication of this report, figures from the 2001 Census relating to ethnic background were released at local authority level. The South West Regional Observatory has already undertaken a detailed examination of the Census data, information from which will be used in this chapter. However, the detailed work done by the Observatory goes well beyond the remit of this report, and it is readily available online at http://www.swo.org.uk/census/bulletin/documents/Ethnicity%20bulletin_v2.pdf To ensure that other information included is as up-to-date as possible, *Moving Towards Inclusion* will focus on research work undertaken in the last four years at a national and local level, work that addresses interesting questions and puts forward recommendations for those responsible for policy and strategy across the region.

1.2 A history lesson

The Black South West Network (BSWN) report, *Mapping the Black Community and Voluntary sector in the South West Region* (2001), offers some interesting background to this report, as it challenges many of the stereo-typical attitudes towards those from a BME background.

The majority of migrant workers entering Great Britain 40-50 years ago were not unskilled workers. They had been encouraged to this country with the offer of jobs in the new industrial society – the ‘high tech’ developing sectors. However, the jobs they were actually offered were posts left vacant in traditional heavy industry and low-skilled service sector jobs in transport or the utilities. Yet according to BSWN, only 13% of men and 5% of women migrating to this country were unskilled. The subsequent lower rates of pay available to BME migrants resulted in an inability to locate anywhere but in the poorer inner city areas and racist attitudes in the general population and in institutions of government resulted in ethnic groups becoming increasingly restricted to particular areas. There is little doubt that the families that moved here did so in order to improve the financial and education prospects of their families, yet many BME communities feel they have been unable to move forward at all.

There is little doubt that discrimination – both individual and institutional - is a serious problem in the South West region, particularly for those living in areas with relatively small BME communities who do not have support groups and services within easy reach.

2. DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE SOUTH WEST

2.1 The latest figures

Figures released in February 2003 indicate that the number of people defining their ethnic background as something other than White: British is 226,708. The number of people of Mixed, Asian, Black or Chinese/Other background stands at nearly 114,000. The 1991 and 2001 data is not directly comparable, but it is clear that national population projections of recent years, suggesting that the BME population has increased at a faster rate than the white population, have been proved correct. Work undertaken by the South West Regional Observatory shows that the white population between the two counts grew by 6% compared to an 81% growth in the ethnic minority population. However, over the ten years 1991-2001, 84% of all population growth in the region was accounted for by those of white ethnic origin.

However, as an indication of how far things have changed, figures from the 1991 Census did show that the BME population made up 1.4% of the general population of the South West. This was one of the lowest shares of non-white population across all regions – only 2% of the national ethnic minority population. Examination of the latest data from Census 2001 shows that the proportion of the South West population of non-white background has increased to 2.3%. However, this is still a very low proportion in comparison to the national average which stands at around 9%, and figures show that the South West is the least ethnically diverse region in England. Only Bristol and Gloucester have an overall BME population approaching the national average. In fact, over two fifths of the region's minority ethnic population live in Bristol, Gloucester and Swindon.

The Indian ethnic minority group is the largest in the South West. 16,394 residents define themselves as Indian. However, at 0.33% of the total population, this is the lowest proportion of all the regions, comparing as it does to 6% in London.

The Asian community is particularly under-represented in the region even in areas with the highest BME populations. The South West average percentage of the population with an Asian background is just 0.67% compared to the England figure of 4.57%.

Apart from Bristol, the area with the largest proportion of the population defining themselves as Asian is Gloucester, followed by Swindon. No other local authority area in the region has an Asian population of more than 1%.

The Regional Observatory analysis has indicated that compared to other regions, the South West has a relatively high proportion of the minority ethnic population describing themselves of 'Mixed', Chinese or Other origin. However, all mixed groups are less numerous in the South West than the England average.

The latest data supports the work undertaken by the BSWN described in the report, *Mapping the Black Community and Voluntary sector in the South West Region*, which offers a local picture of where the BME population is concentrated in the region. All the data shows that it is clustered to the east of the region, the BSWN highlighting that the largest communities are in Bristol (30.8% of the BME population in the region), Gloucester (9.3%) and Thamesdown in Swindon (8.5%). The same report highlights the lack of reliable data available at a very local level, most particularly in rural areas and in areas with a small BME population. This, the report says, results in a 'no problem here'

attitude, which resulted in a lack of effort on the part of those with responsibility for developing strategy to understand the needs and problems of their local BME community. The new Census data will help, and much work will undoubtedly be undertaken over the coming months to make proper sense of it.

2.1.1 The Labour Force Survey

To cause more problems for those attempting to gauge the size of the BME community in Great Britain accurately, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) noticed in November 2002 that ethnicity data in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is subject to errors in the ethnicity variable. Some respondents have had to be re-coded. This has resulted in significant increases in the figures for the White, Asian, Black and Chinese communities, and reductions in figures for mixed race and 'other' ethnic groups.

2.2 Alternative measures

Data available from DfES enables analysis of the number of BME pupils in primary and secondary schools in the region.

Ethnic group - Secondary pupils of compulsory school age - 2001

	White	Black Carib- bean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Paki- stani	Bangla- -deshi	Chine se	Any Other Minority Ethnic Group	All Pupils	% Ethnic group other than white
South West	294,305	660	438	1,089	991	509	395	586	4,024	314,652	1.3
Bath & North East Somerset	11,923	22	12	41	19	23	12	19	121	12,273	2.2
Bournemouth	9,085	13	18	14	25	8	19	44	80	9,770	2.3
Bristol, City of Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	15,250	231	218	499	182	334	80	55	965	17,907	14.3
Devon	31,960	#	10	38	14	#	7	49	43	32,135	0.5
Dorset	36,245	12	25	54	17	11	20	44	117	39,832	0.8
Dorset	27,043	18	13	39	29	5	20	49	103	29,319	0.9
Gloucestershire	36,201	192	23	68	320	45	42	78	553	38,165	3.5
North Somerset	12,007	7	7	10	21	#	20	16	134	12,269	1.8
Plymouth	16,880	20	19	54	18	#	16	47	97	18,829	1.4
Poole	7,830	10	8	8	30	#	7	19	27	8,197	1.3
Somerset	29,676	13	21	33	13	5	19	30	1,314	31,214	4.5
South Gloucestershire	15,844	24	16	114	77	23	23	41	163	16,442	2.9
Swindon	10,744	50	20	62	152	33	75	32	87	11,561	4.4
Torbay	7,535	#	5	9	14	#	5	22	43	8,708	1.1
Wiltshire	26,082	41	23	46	60	7	30	41	177	28,031	1.5

Source: DfES 2001

The far right-hand column shows what percentage of secondary school pupils have an ethnic background other than white in each of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in the South West region. These figures appear to challenge those of the 1991 Census and highlight the dangers of placing any emphasis on that data. Apart from Bristol, the areas with the largest percentage of non-white pupils are to the east of the region – Swindon and South Gloucestershire. The lowest percentage is found in Cornwall. However, the percentages are relatively low in the majority of local authorities in the region.

The greatest number of pupils with a BME heritage is in the black groupings, most particularly 'black other'. The greatest number of those from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds is at school to the East of the region, most particularly in Gloucestershire and Swindon.

Later in this report reference will be made to a recently published Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Research Report, *Ethnic Minority Pupils in Mainly White Schools* (DfES 2002). That study looks specifically at the achievements of BME pupils in schools with approximately 4-6% BME students on roll. The South West average at secondary level is 1.3%, and 14 of the 15 LEAs in the region have a figure of 5% or lower so the findings of that research may have interesting implications for local policy.

3. SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND BME COMMUNITIES – THE IMPACT

The SEU, in *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal* (2000), uses a number of headings under which the BME population suffer a disproportionate disadvantage compared to the white population. Those headings will be followed in this report. Although figures are not available in many of the sections for the South West region (due to the relatively small BME population), the issues for individual communities are as relevant in this region as they are elsewhere, with the added dimension that issues of rural exclusion are particularly pertinent.

3.1 BME communities are: more likely to live in deprived areas

56% of the ethnic minority population of Great Britain live in the 44 most deprived local authorities, according to the Index of Local Deprivation 2000. Furthermore, the SEU estimates that those 44 areas contain four times as many people from minority ethnic groups as other areas.

Population estimates show that BME communities are concentrated in a relatively few urban areas, most particularly London and the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire. In the South West, the greatest proportion is to be found in the City of Bristol. In some parts of London, the BME community is no longer the minority. However, it is important to remember that there are still significant populations in smaller areas, and in those small areas, the feelings of exposure and isolation can be as exclusive as the deprivation experienced in large urban areas.

3.2 BME communities are : more likely to be poor

When looking at the definition of 'poor' in terms of lack of income, it is clear that some BME groups suffer disproportionately. In the general population, approximately 28% of people in England and Wales have a household income of less than half the national average. However, compared to that 28%, the proportion of BME households on low incomes are as follows (SEU):

- Chinese – 34%;
- African Caribbean – 40%;
- Indian – 40%;
- Pakistani – 80%;
- Bangladeshi – 80%.

The combined effects of high unemployment amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, low economic activity amongst women, low waged employment and large family sizes result in the disturbing fact that the majority of people from those ethnic backgrounds can be described as 'poor'. The ONS offer figures from the Family Resources Survey 2000/01 which shows that nearly 60% of the one million people in this group are living in low-income households before housing costs are deducted. This increased to 68% after housing costs are taken into account.

In the South West, this is particularly relevant for the east of the region, as it appears that the highest number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families live in Swindon, Gloucestershire and Bristol.

The TUC report, *Black and Excluded* (1999), looked at changes in the average pay of black and white employees recorded by the LFS over the period 1998 to 1999. This was a period during which the National Minimum Wage was introduced. The difficulty experienced by researchers on this project centred on the fact that only the LFS could be used, as the New Earnings Survey (NES) (which is usually used to support the analysis of gross hourly earnings which is known to have been underestimated in the LFS) does not provide analysis by ethnicity. The report, whilst drawing attention to this problem, dismisses it because the LFS deals equally with both white and black employees. The findings should be treated with caution, not least because the time period used is a short one and includes only a very few months following the implementation of the minimum wage. They are interesting nonetheless. Unfortunately, no figures are available for the South West as numbers in the survey are too small.

The report suggests that the introduction of the minimum wage has been 'disproportionately beneficial' to black employees. From mid-1998 to mid-1999, the average gross hourly pay of black employees increased by £0.49 or by nearly 7%, while for white employees, the increase was £0.33 or just under 4%. The implication is that this increase has been fuelled by the boost to the wages of low-paid BME employees previously working for less than what is now the National Minimum Wage.

The report supports these findings with data showing a higher proportion of black workers employed in industries with the highest percentage of employees earning less than the minimum wage before April 1999 when it was introduced.

Interestingly, figures were released by the ONS in December 2002 showing how far black and minority ethnic groups relied on particular sources of income. These figures indicate that there is not only a wide difference between the experiences of different ethnic groups in the amount they earn. Pakistani and Bangladeshi households were much more heavily reliant on social security benefits, constituting 19% of their household income. Reflecting this, they were the least likely to obtain income from employment, with wages and salaries constituting just 36% of their income. For other groups the average was nearer two thirds. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi community was also much more likely to gain income from self-employment, making up a third of their income compared to just 13% of those from an Indian background and just 10% for other groups. Benefits were also a considerable source of income for the Black group (15%).

Overall, income derived from pensions made up only 5% of household income across ethnic minority groups compared to 13% for the White group. However, the demographic profile of the ethnic minority population is significantly younger which impacts on this average figure (data from the *Family Resources Survey*, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2000/01).

3.3 For BME communities: rates of employment are lower and unemployment higher

3.3.1 Economic Activity

Figures from the Annual Local LFS are most often utilised to gauge the levels of economic activity in the population (economic activity rates relate to the number of people working or actively looking for work). The latest figures are for 2000/2001 and show distinct differences between the economic activity rates of different ethnic groups.

Those from minority ethnic groups are less likely to be economically active than their White counterparts. 85% of White males and 74% of White females are classified as economically active. Black Caribbean women are almost as likely to be economically active as White women, but only 22% of Bangladeshi women and 28% of Pakistani women are active. Bangladeshi men had the lowest male economic activity rates at 69%.

However, the TUC report, *Black and Excluded* (1999), accounts for some of the low rates of activity by pointing out that an increasing percentage of young black people are continuing in full-time education in comparison to young White people. In the late 1990s, 52% of young black men were in full-time education compared to just 29% of young white men, and 44% of young black women were still in full-time education compared to 31% of young white females.

Black and Excluded also examines changing trends in the employment rate of working age people during the 1990s and points out how much more seriously affected the BME population were by the recession of the early 1990s. Employment in ethnic minority groups went deeper into recession and the long-term effects were more acutely felt. Even in the late 1990s, when job growth in the overall economy was strong, the employment rate amongst Black groups fell again. The report points out that it is important not only to look at employment rates across different groups but also to assess how the gap between the employment rates of black and white people widens and narrows over time. In 1990, the gap between employment rates was 15 percentage points, but by the end of the 1990s the gap had increased rather than narrowed, to nearer 20 percentage points.

3.3.2 Unemployment

The following figures from the Annual Local LFS 2001-2002 can be used to illustrate how unemployment rates differ across ethnic groups:

- White men exhibit an unemployment rate of around 5%. For Indian men, the figure is just 2 percentage points higher at 7%, but for Bangladeshi men the rate is approximately 21%, four times higher than the figure for their white counterparts. Other minority ethnic groups show rates of 10-15% and the differences do not appear to vary across different age bands;
- Unemployment is much higher among young people (aged under 25) of all ethnic backgrounds compared to older people. The rate for young white men seems high at 12%, but over the same period, more than 40% of young Bangladeshi men were unemployed. High rates are also experienced among Black African, Pakistani and Black Caribbean men, and those belonging to the Mixed group under the age of 25, with percentages ranging from 25 to 31%;
- Unemployment amongst Bangladeshi women is six times higher than the rate for white women (24% compared to 4%). By comparison, 7% of Indian women were unemployed. Again rates for young women were higher across all ethnic groups.

Figures are not available across all regions as the sample size is too small (the South West has the smallest percentage ethnic minority population of all English regions). However, the picture that emerges from the data that is available shows that overall, the highest unemployment rates for black people are to be found in the West Midlands, the North West, and London.

3.3.3 Self-employment

Self-employment is a more usual form of employment amongst certain ethnic groups than others. People from Pakistani and Chinese backgrounds are far more likely to be self-employed than those in other groups. 22% of Pakistani people and 19% of Chinese people are self-employed compared to just 10% of all Black and White groups.

3.3.4 Employment by sector

The report, *Minority Ethnic Participation and Achievements in Education, Training and the Labour Market* (Owen et al) was published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 2000. It aims to act as a benchmarking document against which future research findings can be compared, offering detailed analysis of minority ethnic employment by industry sector.

The service sector industries are the main sources of employment for ethnic minority groups, particularly distribution (including transport, restaurants and the retail trade) in which Bangladeshi and Chinese men are massively over-represented. (70% and 58% compared to 17% of white and 19% of black men).

Only a very few industries provide employment opportunities for BME women. These are public administration, education and health, as well as banking, finance and insurance. 55% of Black-Caribbean and 47% of Black-African women work in public sector services.

3.4 For BME communities: employment prospects are lower at all qualification levels

Again, there is no local data showing the qualification levels of BME communities in the South West region. Even when more detailed figures become available from Census 2001, it is likely that numbers will be too small to report in many parts of the region. This is frustrating, as the impact of qualification levels on employment prospects for ethnic minorities is a particularly interesting area for policy-makers. Generally, better qualifications result in better employment prospects. However, for those from a BME background the employment prospects are lower at all qualification levels.

Statistics from the Youth Cohort Study show that people from BME communities are actually more likely than white people to participate in further or higher education, and as a whole they are as well qualified, although this varies greatly from group to group. The highest qualification levels are found in the African, Asian and Chinese groups, with the White and Black-Caribbean population in the middle. Again, it is the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities that appear to have the greatest disadvantages with the lowest percentage of the population educated to NVQ level 3 or above.

What good does all this learning do? It must be very difficult for an African-Caribbean person to graduate from university and find he or she is still more than twice as likely to be unemployed as a white graduate.

The report, *Minority Ethnic Participation and Achievements in Education, Training and the Labour Market*, found that the majority of students attending 'Post 92' universities (previously polytechnics) were from a minority ethnic background, most particularly Black-African. (68.6% attending ex-polytechnics compared to 37.7% from white groups). Black

students are also more likely to be over the age of 21 ie 'mature'. (Only 20% are aged less than 21 compared to nearly 50% of white students.)

These would not in themselves be worrying statistics but for the results of work undertaken by Susan Scott of the Commission for Racial Equality and Richard Kwiatkowski of the University of East London, published in 1998. The researchers undertook a survey of the biggest graduate recruiters in the United Kingdom, eleven of which could be described as 'blue chip'. All were apparently committed to equal opportunities, and no 'deliberate or direct' discrimination was uncovered. However recruitment and selection policies appeared to discriminate indirectly against black and African Caribbean applicants, as anyone applying from a 'new' university had very little chance of success, and opportunities were further reduced when findings suggested that mature students also experienced greater difficulties in obtaining graduate employment.

Overall, African-Caribbean applicants studied in this survey were only half as likely to be successful as those from the Indian community. However, Chinese graduates had a better success rate than white candidates.

Ethnic Minority Pupils in Mainly White Schools

Of particular relevance to the South West is the way in which young BME people engage with the education system, as in most LEAs in the region only a very small proportion of the pupils are from an ethnic minority background (see table above). The research report, *Ethnic Minority Pupils in Mainly White Schools* (DfES, 2002), is the result of a study looking specifically at BME pupils' experience in schools where the vast majority of pupils are from a White background.

The report looks at 'factors that might affect the educational achievements of these pupils and examines the perspectives on the situation of minority ethnic pupils and parents as well as their teachers.'

A 'mainly white school' was defined as one in which 4-6% of pupils on the roll were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Apart from the Bristol LEA, all other education authorities in the South West region exhibit percentages in single figures at secondary level.

Although the findings of this report make interesting reading, and should be considered when developing policy, there are research issues that mean that key points must be treated with caution. Firstly, the nature of the research means that the numbers of pupils involved is necessarily small. Similarly, the number of pupils from different ethnic groups is even smaller, making variations in performance between children from one or other ethnic group impossible to measure reliably. This has not been the case in the large body of research work undertaken in primarily urban areas, and in those areas wide variations in performance have been noted.

Specific Findings can be summarised as follows:

- *Achievement.* White pupils in mainly white schools appeared to perform better than White children in urban multi-ethnic schools. This is deduced from a survey of 34,000 pupils in 35 LEAs and looks at data from Key Stage 2 SATS and GCSE. However, it is often the case that the mainly white schools are situated in more affluent, advantaged areas. To a certain degree, that is supported by the evidence that, in secondary schools at least, pupils from Black Caribbean, Indian and

Pakistani backgrounds also shared in the 'educational advantages' available to them to the same extent as white pupils in mainly white schools, outperforming urban counterparts at GCSE Level;

- *Cultural identity*: Results of work undertaken in 14 schools indicated that although aspects of ethnic identity were important to pupils, there was 'considerable variation' in how far they wanted to express that identity at school;
- The majority of schools did not have a particular policy stressing and valuing cultural diversity. Most stated a desire to treat all children equally, not highlighting cultural differences;
- *Racial abuse*: A questionnaire ascertained that more than a quarter of ethnic minority students experienced race-related verbal abuse at school or on the journey to and from school in the week prior to the survey;
- *English as an Additional Language (EAL)*: Mainly white schools in the study varied widely in the amount of teaching support for children learning EAL, none having a strategy beyond the initial stages of learning.

One finding that surely needs to be addressed in areas like the South West is that the majority of teachers surveyed said that issues covered in the research were not part of their initial teacher training or part of subsequent in-service training days.

3.5 For BME communities: racial discrimination is a key factor in employment

Policy Action Team (PAT) research for the SEU indicates that racial discrimination is a key factor in the employment experience of those from BME groups. Analysis undertaken by PAT 1 in *Jobs for All, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Report of the Policy Action Team for Jobs* (DfEE, 2000) showed that unemployment rates are higher amongst BME groups regardless of age, gender or qualification level, and regardless of the area within which they live.

These assertions are supported by figures from the New Deal for Young People (national data) that shows that, on average, someone from an ethnic minority background will need a greater number of job referrals than a white person before they are moved into work (*Jobs for All*).

The report, *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal* makes reference to work by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) in the late nineties that shows that young white job applicants are three times more likely to get interviews than those from an Asian background with the same qualifications and five times more likely than a black person. The report, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage – the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* (Modood, T, Berthoud, R et al, PSI, 1997), states that the proportion of white people 'likely to carry out the most basic acts of discrimination has been stable at about one third for several decades'.

The report, *Breaking the Social Exclusion Cycle* (Learning & Skill Council Somerset, 2002) offers some support for this view in the results of focus groups undertaken with disadvantaged groups in Somerset. Overt discrimination was not a widely perceived problem (Somerset does not have a large ethnic minority community), but respondents felt that they were less likely to get jobs than their white counterparts.

Evidence presented by the TUC in the report, *Qualifying for Racism: How Racism is Increasingly Blighting Career Prospects* (2000), showed that racial discrimination does not only impact on the ability to get a job, it also 'blights' the prospects once in work. 21% of ethnic minority employees are educated to degree level compared to just 16% of white employees, and the qualification levels of BME employees are increasing. Yet the gap between the number of BME employees in managerial positions and their white counterparts has widened over the same period, suggesting that it is much harder for minority ethnic employees to gain promotion to positions of responsibility.

3.5.1 'Rural discrimination'

The Black South West Network (BSWN) report, *Mapping the Black Community and Voluntary Sector in the South West Region*, highlights the issue of 'rural racism', which is key to understanding issues faced by BME communities in a region such as the South West which is predominantly rural with few large urban centres. The BSWN refer to a report by Eric Jay in 1992 entitled *Keep Them in Birmingham* which focused on attitudes in the South West. It is clear that the lack of data relating to relatively small BME communities in areas outside Bristol is a considerable hurdle for BME groups making representations to regional funding providers.

Some of the organisations referred to by BSWN in their study felt that Bristol receives much greater funding than rural areas, and is seen as always taking the lead. This may be at the expense of cities such as Plymouth and Exeter, and large towns like Bournemouth and Poole, where there are relatively small but significant BME communities. Those areas experience issues related to both urban and rural environments and it is crucial that a proper balance is struck, as many of the problems experienced are common to all locations.

3.6 BME communities are : more likely to live in unpopular and overcrowded housing and suffer ill health

Data from the *Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* shows that minority ethnic people are more likely to be unhappy with their accommodation than white people and live in poorer and less popular types of housing. Figures from the same survey also show that Indian, African Asian and Pakistani communities are the most likely to own their own homes (some 80% do). African Caribbean and Bangladeshi people are far less likely to own their own homes, being disproportionately concentrated in social housing.

When looking at figures relating to over-crowding, it is disturbing to note that 15% of minority ethnic households are over-crowded compared to just 2% of white households. For the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, this figure rises to 40%.

The SEU report, *Rough Sleeping* (1998), states that approximately 5% of all those sleeping rough are from an ethnic minority, with voluntary sector organisations reporting that a disproportionately high percentage of the single homeless in hostels are from a minority ethnic background.

There are specific health issues relating to BME groups that may or may not be associated with social disadvantage. Of particular concern, especially to an area such as Bristol where a higher percentage of the population is of African Caribbean heritage, is the fact that the rates of diagnosis of psychotic illness are high relative to the white population, most particularly amongst young men, a problem which is often only

recognised when an individual has gone through the criminal justice system. The resultant treatment is then more likely to be physical rather than a 'talking' therapy. This suggests that BME communities are excluded from full participation in the benefits of mental health services, which are not properly recognising the particular needs of BME communities.

3.7 BME communities are: over-represented in the criminal justice system

The final issue to be discussed in relation to specific issues of social exclusion for BME communities is the significant difference in the statistics relating to criminal offences committed by Black, Asian or White groups. Home Office statistics quoted in the SEU report, *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal*, show that:

- Black people are six times more likely to be 'stopped and searched' than White people;
- There were 117 arrests per 10,000 head of population among Black people compared to 44 among the Asian groups and 27 for the White groups;
- There is a lower cautioning rate for Black people than for White and Asian offenders;
- The Crown Prosecution Service discontinues a higher proportion of cases against Black people on evidential grounds than for White defendants;
- Higher proportions of Black and Asian prisoners were remanded in custody than White prisoners;
- Minority ethnic communities make up 18% of the male prison population and 24% of the female.

Following the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, much work has been undertaken to establish why these huge discrepancies exist in the criminal justice system, and institutional racism has been recognised as part of the problem. However, discussion of this important subject is outside the remit of this work, although highly relevant to policy on social exclusion for BME groups.

Interview with Arief Hussain, (Black South West Network)

Black South West Network (BSWN) supports the infrastructure of black and ethnic minority-based voluntary sector organisations. It has 140 members which include individuals, organisations and umbrella groups. BSWN exists to help them strengthen their capacity and works with them on applications and the management of European and national programmes. It also particularly concentrates on filling the gaps where mainstream provision is letting down black and ethnic minority groups.

A significant problem in dealing with poverty and exclusion in the South West is the lack of general recognition that there are any serious problems at all. The Bath area, for example, has a reputation as an affluent community. Disadvantaged individuals in such communities can find their problems ignored, making life very difficult.

Equality South West is looking at setting up an observatory to monitor equalities issues, collect data and run projects in the region. This would aim to bring more cohesiveness to work in the region. The role of Local Strategic Partnerships and the way they develop

could be significant. There is the potential for them to ensure that different programmes mesh and thereby gain maximum benefit for the community.

Individuals have to want to become engaged, whether it be making an effort to walk 15 minutes to an IT centre or college, and organisations should be doing as much as they can to make it easier for people to get involved. Once they're engaged, work on retention and throughcare is crucial to the success of any project. In the Barton Hill area, the college has linked in to adult and community learning and now offers follow-on courses to those provided in the community.

Case study: The ESOL Project

This is a partnership between Exeter College, Exeter Council for Voluntary Service and the Islamic Centre of the South West. It is often referred to as the 'Olive Tree' after a previous project operated in the area.

The project aims:

'to tackle the issue of social inclusion and to address the language and literacy needs of adults in the community who speak English as a second language.'

Trained teachers and volunteers work to develop classes that can be made available at the convenience of learner, rather than the training organisation. The service is available to groups, families or individuals that experience accessing 'normal educational facilities', recognizing that there are a number of reasons why those for whom English is not the first language have difficulty in approaching mainstream provision - financial, cultural, family or work commitments .

English lessons and certain other training courses are made available free of charge.

Volunteers are actively encouraged to support the project, which in itself is an opportunity for further community capacity building. They are able to help with one-to-one support, the development of Individual Learning Plans, resource development, assisting with crèche facilities and befriending and mentoring learners.

4. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The number of people fleeing their homes to escape repressive regimes, war and poverty is the highest it has been since the Second World War. The gap between the richest and poorest countries in the world seems ever-widening. Media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees is frequently xenophobic and written in such a way as to encourage a hostile reaction, whether by ignorance or design it is not always accurate, with those entering this country frequently portrayed as 'scrounging', 'bogus' and 'illegal'.

However, these portraits are usually quite wrong. Many people come to this country with nothing but the clothes on their backs, having fled from oppression, or having sold all their possessions to pay a 'trafficker' to smuggle them across The Channel. Research has shown that most come to Britain fully expecting to work and pay their way without having to rely on benefits, yet for the first six months following arrival they are not legally permitted to work, forcing them onto the benefits that are available and reinforcing stereotypes. The amount of benefits available to someone claiming asylum or refugee status is lower even than Income Support – and does not offer the automatic benefits Income Support allows.

Many refugees are professional people, with qualifications as doctors, teachers, nurses or accountants. Many are in professions which are actively looking abroad to fill skills shortages. Yet their skills are not officially recognized and those who do find work often find themselves forced into low-skilled, low-paid employment.

There is little doubt that the vast majority of people in the UK learn all they know of refugees and asylum seekers from the paper they buy, and have probably always bought. Some sections of the press have chosen to focus on certain aspects of the issue, creating tensions and promoting discrimination through the promulgation of one-sided and exaggerated information, appealing to the basest fears of the population at large. There is little reporting of the difficulties faced by refugees with skills and training in areas where the UK has severe shortages (doctors, nurses) in establishing their professional credentials, but considerable coverage of how much refugees and asylum seekers 'cost' the welfare state. The overwhelming impression in some quarters is that refugees and asylum seekers are all foreign ne'er-do-wells coming here to sponge off British taxpayers.

It is not within the remit of this report to discuss issues relating to the entitlement or otherwise of migrants to stay in Britain. However, it must be acknowledged that it is in everyone's best interests to support those fleeing their home country into employment where their skills are best used and to access the education and training necessary to help them in a search for sustainable, meaningful employment.

This topic is examined in the report entitled *Refugees' opportunities and barriers in employment and training* (DWP, December 2002) which examines the characteristics of refugees on arrival in Britain and their experiences of work and training after receiving permission to remain.

There are some interesting findings, with large variations in experience between refugees from different countries. The findings can be summarised as follows:

- 27% of refugees had attended university or further education, but the same percentage had very low or no education levels;

- More than 50% of refugees had some qualifications, 23% had a degree or higher;
- 44% of people from Iraq had attended further education;
- 15% of those with qualifications had tried to get them recognised in Britain and the majority of these had been successful. (The main difficulty for those with qualifications that need official recognition in Britain is lack of proof as certificates have had to be left behind in the country of origin);
- 83% spoke English only slightly or not at all on arrival. However, by the time people took part in the research survey (when they had been granted permission to stay) 60% said they spoke English fluently or fairly well;
- 52% of those who spoke English fluently were working, compared with 11% of those who spoke no English;
- English language was given as the main barrier to work by 30% and was mentioned as a barrier by 48%;
- At the time of the survey 15% were in education of whom 22% were studying for a degree;
- The most popular courses undertaken were Information Technology, English, Business with Finance or Accountancy and Healthcare or Nursing;
- Before coming to Britain 42% of respondents were working;
- At the time of the survey 29% had jobs in Britain, compared with a national figure of 60% of ethnic minorities according to the LFS;
- Jobs in Britain were concentrated in catering, translation work, shop and clerical work. Nearly 40% said they had skills that they had not been able to use in a paid job in Britain;
- Refugees' average hourly pay was £7.29, less than the £9.26 that was the average for people ethnic minorities surveyed in the LFS;
- The most common way of finding work in Britain was through family or friends (39%), which had also been the way 63% of people had found their jobs before coming to Britain.

Clearly, being able to communicate effectively in English is key to the success or otherwise of gaining employment for refugees and those granted asylum. Many of those unable to establish the value of the qualifications gained at home are hindered by an inability to describe their specific technical skills in English.

The report, *A Poor Reception: Refugees and asylum seekers: welfare or work?* (The Work Foundation and The Industrial Society, 2001) looks at the contribution of the debate on asylum seekers to the national debate on employment policy. It looks at 'practical steps for employers and policy makers' and suggests the following recommendations:

- National awareness campaign - to shift public opinion and educate employers about immigration law and the skills and experience of asylum seekers and refugees;
- New standard work permit procedures – offering greater access to permission to work;
- New occupation and skills data – research on the occupations and skills of refugees and asylum seekers;
- Individual skills assessments;
- Recognition scheme for non-UK qualifications – including bridging training by relevant professional bodies.
- Standardisation of English language tuition.

It points out that evidence from a government report on migration suggests that legal migration will still be insufficient to meet skill shortages in some professions and that 'there is little evidence that native workers are harmed by migration. There is considerable support for the view that migrants create new jobs and fill labour market gaps, improving productivity and reducing inflationary pressures'.

This is not the kind of evidence that is presented by much of the media, which whips up public opinion against migrants by presenting difficulties experienced by the native population seemingly exacerbated by the government focus on assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. As the numbers of asylum seekers in the South West region increases, often in towns with very small minority ethnic populations and few support services, it is vital that regional agencies move now to ensure that awareness of the real issues is at the forefront of the argument, and that migrants are given the opportunities in education and employment that will allow them to contribute positively to the regional economy.

A national report published in December 2002 by Refugee Action entitled *Is it safe here? Refugee women's experiences in the UK* makes disturbing reading, and highlights the needs of women at a time when the picture of refugees and asylum seekers as painted by the press is one of young men coming here on economic grounds. The report is the result of work with 149 women refugees of a number of different nationalities, and the results of four focus groups held in Liverpool, Leicester, Bristol and Margate, Its main findings were:

- 84% of refugee women live in accommodation without a telephone;
- 30% walk everywhere because they cannot afford transport;
- 30% have been verbally or physically abused since their arrival;
- 70% are here without a spouse, often widowed or separated by the conflict they are fleeing;
- 37% of mothers have been separated from their children;
- Nearly all women recognise that learning English is an absolute necessity, but 50% are barred from classes because of childcare issues;
- 53% of women refugees have secondary education levels or above;
- 65% hope to return home when conditions leading them to seek asylum were remedied;
- They want to study, learn English and 'do something useful'.

The UK as a whole receives just 2% of the world's refugees and 30% of those are women. Yet even the government persists in explaining the increase in asylum seekers as the result of an influx of 'young, single men who have deserted their families for economic gain' (Lord Rooker, Immigration Minister, May 2002).

To ensure that employment policy in the South West can meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered in the additional skills brought into the area by refugees, policy-makers need to ensure that all areas in the region, not just Bristol and Plymouth, have sufficient resources to support and educate employers, refugees and the public at large.

4.1 Asylum seekers in the South West

Data on asylum seekers and refugees is scarce and frequently inaccurate. It is so at a national level, so figures for the South West are largely unavailable. The most often quoted data on refugees and asylum seekers is from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). The figures for March 2002 are given below.

No of Asylum Seekers in NASS Accommodation March 2002	
Plymouth	340
Bristol	280
Exeter	50
Disbenefited (South West)	10

However, although this offers a picture of the areas within the region that are currently accommodating the greatest numbers of those seeking asylum, the picture is distorted by the fact that these figures do not include refugees or asylum seekers no longer in NASS supported accommodation.

There is little doubt that, in the very near future, these numbers will increase and smaller towns within the South West region will be asked to support asylum seekers and refugees. It is therefore a priority area for regional agencies.

Case study: Refugee Action

Refugee Action is already very active in Bristol (covering Bristol, Swindon and Gloucester) and Plymouth. In Bristol, Asylum Advice Caseworkers:

- provide advocacy for people subject to the NASS dispersal system;
- ensure that the immediate and longer term needs of asylum seekers are met;
- work in partnership with statutory and voluntary advice and service providers to develop equal and sensitive access for asylum seekers;
- ensure advice and service providers are aware of the bureaucratic and cultural challenges facing asylum seekers.

Refugees in Swindon are supported by the Swindon Asylum Seekers Group and the Citizens Advice Bureau, and in Gloucester refugees and asylum seekers are supported by GARAS (Gloucester Action for Refugee and Asylum Seekers). In Plymouth, Refugee Action focuses on issues relating to employment, but also aim to support asylum seekers and refugees with post-decision housing and health services.

The Language Barrier

Currently much support is given to Somali, Kurdish and Afghan refugees. In Bristol, an Interpreters Forum has been established, with one planned for Plymouth. These are set up to address the issues of the current lack of interpretation and translation.

Statutory and voluntary agencies work with community groups to pool knowledge of the language needs of refugees and work towards ensuring that language barriers are addressed and do not prevent access to necessary services.