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**M o v i n g   T o w a r d s   I n c l u s i o n**

A picture of disadvantage in the South West

**A report for SLIM by Suzanne Grogan Associates**

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# M o v i n g T o w a r d s I n c l u s i o n

## A picture of disadvantage in the South West

*Moving Towards Inclusion* updates and supercedes the South West TEC reports of 1997/8 which examined the labour market experience of ESF priority groups. Since those reports were published, a raft of policy and strategy documents has been published by government, and the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit has resulted in a fresh look at the way in which disadvantage affects the lives of individuals and communities.

It is now accepted that issues of 'exclusion' and 'inclusion' cannot be looked at in isolation - either in terms of the barriers experienced or the 'groups' to which those defined as 'disadvantaged' belong. This report seeks to examine how policy and strategy has changed over the past five years and provide an 'overview' of the multiple disadvantage experienced by many residents of the South West. In addition, and in recognition of the success of the TEC reports, annexed chapters will be included offering a profile of the issues as they relate specifically to each of the ESF beneficiary groups.

- Lone Parents
- Older workers
- Ethnic minorities
- Young people at risk of exclusion
- Homeless persons
- People with a disability
- Returners to the labour market
- Ex-offenders
- Those involved in drug and alcohol abuse

This report offers as comprehensive a picture as possible of current levels of disadvantage amongst the population of the South West, and the strategies that have been developed to remove the barriers. When *Moving Towards Inclusion* it is



important to recognize the diverse needs of individual communities of interest and avoid assumptions about what it is that the key beneficiary groups to which this report refers want and need from the ‘society’ we seek to include them in.

This report draws on data from a wide variety of statistical sources, including the latest figures from the 2001 Census. Running in tandem with this work there has been a large-scale report undertaken by SLIM called *Reaching Out Across the Region: An analysis of European Objective 3 projects in the South West*. Data collated and mapped for that work has been utilised in this report to ensure consistency of approach.

Some disadvantaged groups are better served by the data than others. This report has therefore relied upon pertinent regional and national secondary studies in order to obtain a clearer picture of need in those groups which do not figure to any meaningful extent in official statistics.

This report is designed to be used by all working towards a more inclusive society in the South West from regional, co-financing, agencies such as the Regional Development Agency (RDA), co-financing organisations such as Local Learning and Skill Councils (LLSC’s) down to grassroots organisations running, or bidding to run ESF Objective 3 projects. The aim is to ensure that Objective 3 activity in the South West, as expressed in individual bids, organisational and partnership strategies, is informed by robust and accessible evidence on the skills and learning needs of individuals and businesses across the region.

- 56% of the ethnic minority population of Great Britain live in the 44 most deprived local authorities.
- In the general population, approximately 28% of people in England and Wales have a household income of less than half the national average. However, the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households on low incomes is as follows: Chinese 34%, African Caribbean 40%, Indian 40%, Pakistani 80%, Bangladeshi 80%.
- Those from minority ethnic groups are less likely to be economically active than their White counterparts.
- White men exhibit an unemployment rate of around 5%. For Indian men the figure is 7%, but for Bangladeshi men the rate is approximately 21%.
- The highest qualification levels are found in the African, Asian and Chinese groups, with the White and Black-Caribbean population in the middle. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities appear to have the greatest disadvantages with the lowest percentage of the population educated to NVQ level 3 or above.
- 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%.
- 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.

According to the report, *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal*, published by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2000, 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

In addition, there is little doubt that racial discrimination is a significant factor in the levels of disadvantage experienced by BME groups.

## Drugs and Alcohol Misuse

One of the greatest difficulties faced in the analysis of drugs and alcohol misuse is the lack of accurate local data. Official statistics only mask the real levels of drugs use, focusing on numbers in treatment.

Drug abuse can be defined as the regular use of illicit (illegal) drugs or the abuse of legal prescription drugs such as tranquilisers or sleeping pills. This section of the report will also include the misuse of alcohol as 'drug abuse'. 'Abuse' refers generally to a voluntary use of drugs, at least at an initial stage. As use increases or continues, abuse may become 'dependence'. The element of 'choice' is then lost to the user as the need becomes compulsive. Treatment is required before support in the community can be effective. 'Social inclusion' is not necessarily the first concern.

Those misusing drugs and/or alcohol have a serious impact on those within their close circle of friends and family and on society as a whole:

- Risk to personal safety, including dangers of overdose, accident and violent behaviour
- Damage to health, including possible brain damage, liver failure and mental health problems
- Contact with the legal system, including risk of imprisonment or fine
- Destructive behaviour, having an impact on the user, family and friends.

### The particular dangers of alcohol

- It kills over 50 times as many people in the UK as heroin, ecstasy, cocaine, crack and methadone put together
- More than 30,000 people die in the UK each year from alcohol-related illnesses
- More than 4,000 murders have been carried out by people under its influence since 1987
- Eight out of ten people treated in hospital accident and emergency units are there for alcohol-related problems
- Ten people die each week in the UK as a result of their own or someone else's drink-driving.

There is currently much 'tough talk' coming out of Whitehall. David Blunkett, announcing the latest strategy, is quoted as saying:

"All controlled drugs are harmful and will remain illegal.... We will maintain our focus on Class A drugs as they cause the most harm. We must achieve real reductions in the level of problematic use if we are to turn around the lives of individuals and their communities... Education, prevention, minimising harm, treatment and effective policing are our most powerful tools in dealing with drugs... The best place for drug using offenders is in treatment and out of trouble".

## Ex-Offenders

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has identified nine 'key factors' that impact on the likelihood of an individual offending and re-offending. They are:

- Education
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Attitudes and self-control
- Housing
- Family networks
- Employment
- Mental and physical health
- Institutionalisation and life-skills
- Financial support and debt

Compared to the general population prisoners are:

- 13 times more likely to have been in care as a child
- 13 times more likely to have been unemployed
- 10 times as likely to have been a regular truant
- 2.5 times as likely to have had a family member convicted of a criminal offence
- 6 times as likely to have been a young father

The prisoner or ex-offender is the all too frequent result of a lifetime of experience of any or all of the key components of what is defined as social exclusion.

- 80% have the writing skills at or below that of an 11 year old
- 65% have the numeracy skills at or below that of an 11 year old
- Younger prisoners have an educational background more than 30% worse than the figures for older prisoners
- More than 70% suffer from two or more mental disorders
- 70% of prisoners were using drugs before they were imprisoned
- 20% of male sentenced prisoners and 37% of females have attempted suicide in the past
- Approximately 50% of prisoners had no GP before entering prison
- Although 70% had drugs misuse problems, only 20% of those had had any contact with drug treatment services
- Prisoners are 15 times as likely to be HIV positive as the general population.

In addition to the acknowledged damage to mental and physical health, the SEU estimate that:

- One third of prisoners lose their home whilst in prison
- Two-thirds lose their job
- One fifth have increased financial problems
- More than two-fifths lose touch with family

It is therefore in the interests of all concerned to ensure that policies are in place to support prisoners and those leaving prison and that agencies are resourced to deal with the multiplicity of problems that can be faced by those leaving custody.

# Homelessness

There are 20 million households in England most of which have decent housing. There are, however, a significant number that do not have adequate accommodation or are at risk of homelessness. Few people choose to be homeless. The reasons for it include family and relationship breakdown, domestic violence, debt, mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, and arrears of rent and mortgage payments.

## Factors increasing the risk of homelessness

- Institutionalisation - including time in care, contact with the criminal justice system and service with the Armed forces.
- Health - alcohol and drugs misuse, mental health problems or a combination of the two. Physical or sexual abuse.
- Relationship breakdown - disputes with parents/step-parents, relationship breakdown (marital or otherwise), bereavement.
- Education and employment - learning difficulties, exclusion from school, unemployment.
- Housing - shortage, cost.
- Financial - benefit problems, mortgage and rent arrears.

The issue of 'hidden homelessness' and undercounting is one that has led to the official figures being challenged. In urban areas, a significant undercount has been identified by Shelter. However, in rural areas, such as those that dominate the South West, there is little quantitative research by anyone to confirm the numbers sleeping rough in the countryside.

The most recent research noted that the level of rural homelessness in rural local authority areas had increased at a faster rate than in urban areas during the 1980's and that the rural homeless represented some 12% of the total homeless population.

It is the multiplicity of specific problems facing the most vulnerable homeless people that create the greatest problem for agencies working with and monitoring homeless groups. Service providers need to work in partnership to ensure people with multiple problems do not find each need dealt with in isolation from the others, otherwise they will continue to fall through the gaps. What may be of greatest interest to those developing policy and strategy in the South West is the fact that the areas in which people tend to earn the lowest average annual wages are areas with some of the highest property prices.

- It is estimated that there are 1.7 million one parent families in Britain today - this is nearly a quarter of all families.
- More than one in five children is now cared for in a one parent family
- 9 out of 10 lone parents are women.
- The average age for a lone parent is 35.
- Lone parents have overtaken pensioners as the poorest group in society. More than 60% of children in one parent families are poor compared to a quarter of children living with both parents
- The full time hourly rate of pay for women is just 82% of that for men. If they work part-time, this falls to 61%.
- Black Caribbean lone parents are significantly more likely to be working and working full-time than any other group and less likely to be getting benefits.
- At any one time, less than 3% of all lone parents are teenagers.
- Only 15% or one in seven lone mothers have never married or lived with their child's father.
- 35% of lone parents have experienced violence in their last relationship with three-quarters of them sustaining physical injuries,

At different times, and in different sections of the media, the spotlight has fallen on particular aspects of lone parenthood, with the resultant generalisations and negative images that result in increased levels of exclusion for the groups involved.

There is a huge variation in the needs of lone parents, influenced by factors such as race, age of children and family support network. There should no longer be a stereotypical view of a lone parent as a 'problem' as it has now been recognised that there are myriad routes into lone parenthood. It must also be recognised that no one is a lone parent for life. The dependency of any child inevitably weakens as it grows older, allowing the parent to make other life choices.

Evidence shows that most lone parents want to work, but having been out of the labour market for a number of years, they frequently lack confidence and the up-to-date work skills necessary to make an easy transition into work.

## Older workers

The demographics of the working population is a current preoccupation of governments across Europe, who are grappling to develop policies that encourage men and women in the older age brackets to remain in the labour market. In 1979, analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that 84% of men over the age of 50 were working. By the year 2000, that figure had gone down to 69%.

People aged 50-64 represent:

- 1/3rd of people of working age;
  - 1/5th of those actually in work;
  - 1/10th of those on employer and government training programmes.
- (Third Age Employment Network (TAEN) 2002)

This issue is particularly relevant for the South West as it has a larger percentage of older people than any other region in England. 19% of the population is over the age of 65, with a further 21% over 45. The South West is forecast to experience the biggest age shift of any region - the proportion of over 60s is estimated to rise from 21% in 1997 to 28% in 2021.

The report, *Taking Account of Age - Retaining Older People in the Workforce - Training and Retaining Older Workers* (TAEN, 2002), examines the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the older person in the workforce:

### **Advantages**

- Greater experience of work and life, better coping skills, reliability
- Loyalty, attendance, enthusiasm, motivation
- Higher level communication skills

### **Disadvantages**

- Health issues
- Lacking skills in new techniques/technology
- Resistance to change
- Less flexible
- Potential imbalance in age profile of employees

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that the employment of older workers is becoming more important in all the countries that were part of the study, and that all the countries have adopted policies to target older workers and encourage them into the labour market. These include:

- Removing incentives to early retirement;
- Encouraging later retirement and flexible retirement;
- Legislation against age discrimination;
- Awareness-raising campaigns and advice and guidance for employers;
- Training programmes aimed at older workers;
- Support for intermediate labour markets;

## People with disabilities

- There are much lower levels of economic activity amongst people with a disability. Nationally, figures show an activity rate of 52% in comparison to 86% for non-disabled people.
- 41% of the disabled are doing some paid work, compared to 80% of non-disabled people.
- Over 50% of disabled people have no qualifications at all compared to 28% of those without a disability.
- One third of those with a disability were qualified at NVQ Level 2 or above compared to nearly 60% of those without.
- Younger people with a disability are much more likely to have higher level qualifications than their older counterparts. This suggests that more egalitarian attitudes to education for the disabled, including greater inclusion in mainstream education in recent years, are having an impact on the educational achievement of disabled young people.
- Mobility is a deciding factor in whether programmes are a success.

The definition of disability in this report will be that used by the Disability Discrimination Act - that is *a person must have (or had) a disability or impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least a year, and substantially limits their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.*

However, there is much confusion in the public mind about what a 'disability' actually is. For many people without a disability, their view of what being 'disabled' means is stereotypically physical - the necessity to use a wheelchair (when in fact, permanent wheelchair users account for less than 5% of the disabled population) a guide dog or a hearing-aid, and to be dependent on others to undertake tasks which non-disabled people manage alone. Survey work undertaken for the report, *'Disabled for Life?' Attitudes towards and experiences of disability in Britain*, published by the Department for Work and Pensions, suggests that the general population considers that a disability:

- Is always visible
- Implies difference
- Is usually physical

Challenging these attitudes is fundamental to the issue of exclusion and inclusion and must be at the centre of effective policy making in the region.

## Returners to the Labour Market

This is a beneficiary group that defies a strict definition. In research literature, the analysis of data and development of policy relating to 'returners' is frequently gender-specific. There are 'women returners' - a term generally referring to women who have been away from the labour market to care for children and older people for example, and there are 'returners' for whom support is necessary following a lengthy period of unemployment - most often men. However, there are so many reasons for detachment from the work environment within these groups that it is not possible to have a 'one size fits all' policy. This is perhaps why much government-sponsored research relating to supporting people into work is published as part of a discussion on overall employment policy.

There are a number of key issues:

- The psychological impact of long-term unemployment
- Equality of access to the labour market
- The 'work-life balance'
- Development of skills to meet workplace change
- The quality of jobs people 'return' to – those re-entering the labour market after a long period of time often face low pay, poorer working conditions and a lack of opportunities for training and career development.

There has, of course, been a radical change in the support offered to those without work, with the Government adopting a 'welfare to work' programme in the form of the New Deal in all its various forms. However, there are other important approaches to encouraging greater participation in the labour market, including an overhaul of the tax system, new childcare initiatives and Intermediate Labour Markets for example.

Although this chapter is to focus on women returning to work following parenthood and those people who are long-term unemployed (mainly men), it is clear that this 'returning' to the labour market is a theme that runs through this report on how to 'include' disadvantaged groups in society.

## Young People at Risk of Exclusion

Young people most at risk of labour market and social exclusion often face multiple disadvantages. The Social Exclusion Unit's *Bridging the Gap* report identifies the following groups as most likely to be non-participants in education, training or employment between the ages of 16 and 18 years:

- Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Young carers
- Homeless or looked after young people
- Young people with learning difficulties and/or a disability
- Young people with mental illness problems
- Teenage parents
- Young offenders
- Drug and alcohol misusers

Young people who are not participating in education and training between 16 and 17 years are more likely to:

- Be unqualified, untrained and unemployed
- Earn less if they are employed
- Be a teenage parent
- Experience depression and/or poor physical health
- Have a criminal record.

It is important to maintain some degree of flexibility when defining this group. In essence, the key issue is that young people face difficult decisions and pressures as they make the transition from compulsory education to the increasingly flexible and competitive labour market. For some, this transition is straight forward, but for others it can be a protracted and difficult time in which many young people have, in the past, been lost to the system and have fallen through the net of support agencies. This is most commonly the case for those who leave full-time education with few or no qualifications and who face a number of disadvantages.

This is a chapter that includes the wealth of local data that is available, largely due to the requirements upon schools to monitor pupils and performance more closely than ever before.

South West  
Observatory



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