

Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market in Newcastle

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Foreword

Gender Equality

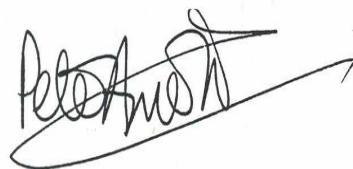
Newcastle City Council has worked in close partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, and eleven other local authorities over the last three years to take part in this national research study, the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* project (GELLM).

In participating in this Project the organisation has made a firm commitment to disseminate and implement the research findings by engaging with key stakeholders during all stages of the project. The philosophy for implementing change in relation to gender equality has been based on the commitment that each Service Area will continue to be instrumental in taking forward the responsibility for aligning their service priorities for gender equality in their Business Plans.

Through active participation in this research project, Newcastle City Council is better prepared for its new legal responsibility for implementing the 'Gender Duty' requirements of the Equality Act 2006 in all key service areas, and to effectively address gender inequality in the borough.



Ian Stratford
Chief Executive



Peter Arnold
Leader of the Council

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Key findings

This study has explored the situation of ethnic minority women in Newcastle - particularly those resident in the wards of Elswick and Wingrove in the city's West End - in relation to their access to the labour market.

The study has used a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, and has built on other research. This report presents its findings, noting that:

- A range of national policy initiatives have been developed to tackle the inequalities faced by ethnic minorities in relation to education, training and employment. These include *Aimhigher*; the work of the *Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force* and the *Ethnic Minority Outreach scheme*; and the *Fair Cities Programme*.
- Refugees are now among the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market, due to: their varied levels of literacy in their first language; their sometimes limited fluency in English; and issues in relation to their other skills and qualifications. They are also affected by their country of origin and their gender. Official rules restricting their access to employment, benefits and other services during the application process put them at further disadvantage. Most of the policy literature and analysis of these issues fails to distinguish between the contrasting needs of men and women in these groups.

At the local level, Newcastle's policy agenda in this field focuses on: significant growth in the area's ethnic minority population in recent years; the changing profile of the settled communities, and the impact this has on service provision; and on engaging with employers seeking better to reflect their local community and to extend their labour pool.

- Although Newcastle's ethnic minority population is small, it is concentrated in the city's West End wards, particularly Elswick and Wingrove, which experience some of the highest levels of deprivation in the city, and where over a quarter of the population are from ethnic minority groups. Our detailed analysis of the 2001 Census reveals that:
- The Pakistani community make up the largest ethnic group in Wingrove; while the Bangladeshi group is the largest in Elswick.

These communities have a much younger age profile. Women under age 24 make up almost two thirds of the local Bangladeshi population. Only 7% of Pakistani women in Newcastle are over state pension age, compared with 35% of all women in England.

- These wards have a higher proportion of households with dependent children. 58% of Bangladeshi households consist of couples with dependent children, compared with just 17% of all Newcastle households.
- Women in Elswick and Wingrove are less likely to be employed. In Elswick, only 4% of Bangladeshi women were employed full-time, compared with 38% of all local women. A much higher proportion of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women were looking after their home and family full-time, and women in these groups were also more likely to be students.
- There are very high rates of unemployment among economically active Bangladeshi women in Elswick – 25% compared with just 5% of all economically active women in the city. Thus many are actively seeking, but unsuccessful in securing, employment.
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Newcastle are more likely to work in sales and customer service occupations and in the wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotel sectors, and are less likely to be employed as managers, senior officials and professionals.

Other data sources used indicate a change in the local ethnic minority population since the 2001 Census. Of the estimated 9,000 refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Newcastle between 2000 and 2003, the majority were young (aged 20 to 35), single (two-thirds), and male (70%). Most had been in the UK and the North East for less than a year, and 80% did not have permission to work. Overall, refugees and asylum seekers were a highly diverse group, with varied educational levels, employment experiences, aspirations, health, abilities, family arrangements and training and support needs. Over half could speak some English; a quarter had qualifications at Level 3 or above; and most (60%) had previously been employed or self-employed.

The findings from the study's small-scale arts-based workshops - with a diverse group of first generation migrant women from these wards - reflect the views of those involved and cannot therefore to be taken to be representative of all

ethnic minority women in the area. However we have successfully identified many issues that are important to this group of women. Our findings suggest that local ethnic minority women's disadvantage arises from their:

- *Migration history*: this includes their settlement patterns, residency status, and whether they are first or subsequent generation migrants.
- *Language skills*: these affect women's confidence, their motivation and employment aspirations, and their ability to access information and support services
- *Lack of work experience in the UK*: this limits their access to employment opportunities
- *Cultural and personal/family circumstances*: these are highly variable both within and between ethnic groups; and can act as both barriers and enabling factors.
- *Experiences of racial harassment* and perceptions of threatening places.
- *Circumstances in the local area*: these include entrenched poverty; limited suitable local employment opportunities, and variations in the support infrastructure, including childcare provision, public transport, and other services.

Introduction

This report presents research undertaken as part of the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* (GELLM) research programme (Appendix 1). Parallel local research studies on women in ethnic minority communities have also been conducted in four other English local authorities (Leicester, Somerset, Camden and Southwark), and these are reported separately. A synthesis report of the findings from all five areas is also available (Stiell et al, 2006). The *Gender Profile of Newcastle's Labour Market* (Buckner et al 2004) provides the district-wide statistical evidence and context for the study. This study is one of three local research studies relating to Newcastle; the other two are also available as separate reports (Escott et al 2006; Yeandle et al 2006).

This study aimed to:

- Research the skills, achievements and aspirations of ethnic minority women in selected localities.
- Investigate mismatches between skills and employment opportunities.

- Identify the support needs of ethnic minority women which need to be met if they are to overcome barriers in accessing the labour market or progressing within it.
- Provide opportunities for activities that will be empowering and confidence-building for women from ethnic minority groups.
- Make recommendations about ways of supporting ethnic minority women in entering /progressing in the labour market.

The study included:

- Detailed analysis of 2001 Census data for ethnic minority women living in Elswick and Wingrove, and comparisons with Newcastle and England as a whole.
- A review of existing local information and data on these issues.
- Qualitative evidence gathered during innovative arts-based workshops and focus groups with first generation migrant women living locally.

The workshops were developed in close collaboration with Newcastle City Council and *First Step*, a women-only, arts-based community organisation based in the West End of the city. Established in 1991, First Step offers formal and informal opportunities for local ethnic minority women to develop their skills through arts, EAL/ESOL¹, basic IT, numeracy and vocational qualifications.

The study explores differences in labour market patterns and experiences for ethnic minority women in the wards of Elswick and Wingrove, in Newcastle's West End. These areas have the highest concentrations of ethnic minorities in Newcastle. They are also amongst the most disadvantaged wards in England, with very high levels of economic inactivity and poverty.

This report, which relates specifically to Newcastle, outlines the national and local policy background in this field as it affects statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and highlights the main findings from the research.

¹ EAL (English as an Additional Language) and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) are language support courses taught to non-English speakers.

Ethnic minority women and the labour market: national and local policy developments

National policy

Across England there are complex variations in the levels of educational achievement and labour market participation among men and women from ethnic minority groups. Although a high proportion of people from ethnic minority groups enter post-16 education and training, many face barriers to learning, gaining qualifications, and finding and progressing within employment (PIU 2002; Berthoud 2003; Barnes et al 2005; TUC 2006). Muslim women - mainly those from Pakistani and Bangladesh - have the highest rates of economic inactivity and unemployment, and suffer the greatest employment penalty of any ethnic group (Twomey 2001; Lindley et al 2004; Berthoud and Blekesaune 2006). Whilst differences between first and subsequent generations of Muslim women have been identified (Dale et al 2002), the employment rates of female Muslim graduates still lag far behind those of their male counterparts, and of other female graduates (STEER 2005).

The labour market disadvantage of ethnic minority groups is a major policy concern for government, and has resulted in a number of national policy initiatives relating to education, skills, training, employment and social inclusion, including:

- The *Aimhigher* initiatives, which seek to increase the higher education participation rates of under-represented groups by raising the aspirations and motivation of young people in schools, further education and work-based learning programmes.²
- The *Learning and Skills Council's* equality and diversity strategy, which includes initiatives aimed at ethnic minority learners and staff (Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant; Adult Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant; Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities; Black Leadership Initiative) (LSC 2004, 2005).
- The *Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force*, set up to deliver the recommendations of the 2003 Strategy Unit report, *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*.³ The Task Force focuses on: *building employability*, to tackle the lower levels of education and skills of some ethnic minority

groups; *connecting people to work*, to address the problems faced by the groups with the lowest rates of employment living in deprived areas, where access to support and advice is most limited; and *equal opportunities in the workplace*, to tackle employer discrimination. Its strategy highlights the importance of English language skills, noting that three-quarters of Bangladeshi women aged over 25 are unable to speak English fluently, and require more ESOL training (EMETF 2004:27).

- The Department for Work and Pensions' *Ethnic Minority Outreach* (EMO) schemes operates through Jobcentre Plus, and with private and voluntary sector organisations, to attract job seekers into the mainstream labour market. They offer outreach-based, employer focused, and positive action training provision. The EMO schemes have been successful in increasing ethnic minorities' awareness of employment and training opportunities, especially among Indian and Pakistani women, where the language and outreach skills of EMO staff were crucial in reaching these groups (Barnes et al 2005).
- The employer-led *Fair Cities Programme*, which highlights the barriers to employment often faced by ethnic minorities, including: low levels of basic and workplace skills; their disproportionate concentration in localities with poor employment opportunities; and the relatively weak social networks available to help people from ethnic minority groups gain access to employment⁴. This initiative targets industries facing skill shortages, where employers may be willing to explore recruiting from non-traditional labour pools, and may wish to employ a more diverse workforce, to reflect diversity among their customers and service users.

A focus on refugees and asylum seekers. Recent data suggests that refugees are now among the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market (Bloch 2002; Barnes et al 2005). The causes of their flight, literacy skills in their first language, and English fluency, as well as their country of origin, education, age, social class, household composition, cultural norms and religious beliefs vary greatly, and are key determinants of their economic activity, with important variations by gender (Bloch 2004; Kirk 2004). The removal of asylum seekers' employment concessions in July 2002 further reduced the employment prospects of those in exile.

² www.aimhigher.ac.uk

³ www.emetaskforce.gov.uk/summary.asp

⁴ www.nationalemploymentpanel.gov.uk).

Women from some countries are less likely than men to receive formal education and to be literate in their first language. Research with refugee women found that 16% were in paid work, and that those in employment were most likely to be fluent in English, to be under 35 years old, to have lived in the UK for five years or more, and to have gained a UK qualification. However, their working conditions, terms of employment and pay were generally poor, and the level of their work did not reflect their skills and experience (Bloch 2002).

Official policies and initiatives to tackle this issue include the Home Office's refugee integration strategy *Integration Matters*⁵, launched in 2005, and *Working to Rebuild Lives*⁶, the DWP's refugee employment strategy. Both emphasise refugees 'gaining skills to give something back to the community'. They highlight unemployment and the use of Jobcentre Plus and examine ways of tackling racism and housing problems. They identify the need for regional and local action, involving voluntary and community groups which can provide both direct support and volunteering opportunities. However, these initiatives do not address gender directly, and *Working to Rebuild Lives* makes no reference to women or to gender.

These national level strategies have been developed in the context of over 30 years of equalities legislation, including the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Race Relations Act 1975* (and its subsequent amendments), and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*. The recent enactment of the *Equality Act 2006* will in 2007 establish a *Commission for Equality and Human Rights* and a new duty requiring public bodies to promote gender equality. Service providers and public sector employers will be required to meet the needs of different groups of women and men, and to take action to meet equality goals in consultation with their service users and employees.

Despite these developments, the recent publication of the Women and Work Commission's report⁷ has been criticised for its lack of emphasis on the specific situation of ethnic minority women, such as failing to address the gender and ethnic pay gap, and recommending mandatory pay audits. Without more robust evidence and actions, critics argue, 'multiple discrimination' will continue⁸. The Equal

Opportunities Commission is currently undertaking an investigation into the participation, pay and progression of ethnic minority women in the GB labour market, which may further raise the profile of these issues⁹.

Newcastle's circumstances and policy responses

Within the city of Newcastle, the local authority has identified the following key issues and priorities in relation to ethnic minority groups:

- *The need for more up-to-date data and information* on: the 'new emerging communities'; the city's changing ethnic minority population; and the issues facing the most disadvantaged groups. Since 2000, Newcastle has been a major recipient/host city in the Government's dispersal strategy for refugees and asylum seekers.
- *Growing local demand for support services*. The changes in national legislation prohibiting asylum seekers from working, and rules limiting recent migrants' access to free training courses, have increased demand for services, especially adult education and ESOL courses, considered vital in 'keeping women connected' while they await Home Office decisions on their status.
- *The changing profile of Newcastle's settled ethnic minority communities*. Local knowledge indicates that established ethnic communities in Newcastle are also changing, and becoming more concentrated in particular geographical areas. First and second generation ethnic minority women in these areas are thought to have more 'localised aspirations' – preferring the 'safety' of their neighbourhood for work and training. This contrasts with the growing numbers of third generation ethnic minority women, who have different aspirations and educational and work-related expectations, leading to some cultural conflicts.
- *Working with employers*. Newcastle City Council works closely with the *North East Employers Coalition* to address skills shortages and fill job vacancies, and to support employers in diversifying their workforces to reflect the communities they serve.

These priorities are underpinned by other Newcastle City Council strategies and initiatives, which are outlined later in the report.

⁵ www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws_policy/refugee_integration/a_national_strategy.html

⁶ www.dwp.gov.uk/

⁷ www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/publications/
⁸ <http://www.blackbritain.co.uk/news/>

⁹ <http://www.eoc.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=17696>

Ethnic minority women in Newcastle's West End

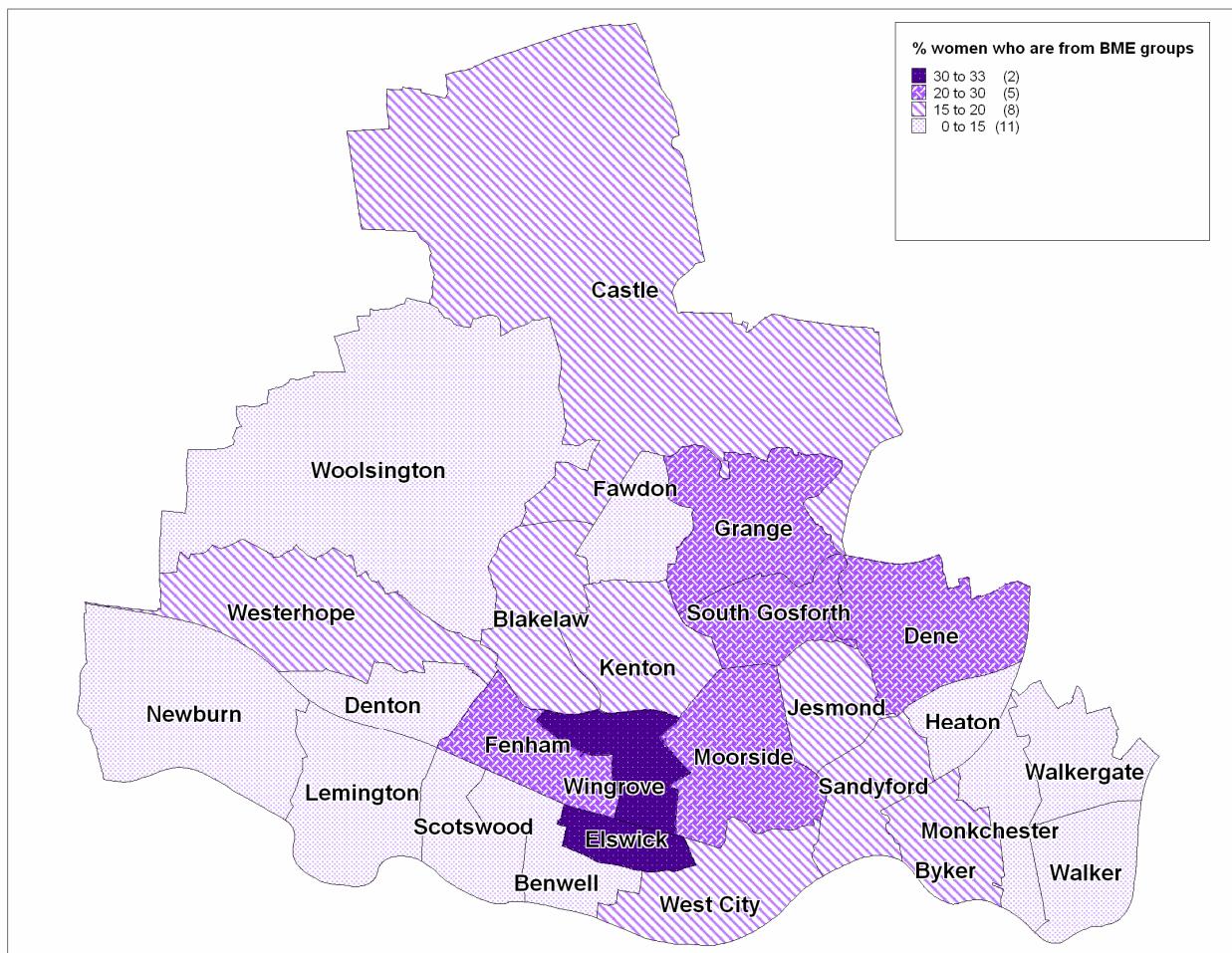
Ethnicity in Elswick and Wingrove

Compared with England as a whole, Newcastle has a relatively small non-White population (6.9% in 2001), with the Asian and Asian British groups together forming the largest ethnic minority group (4.4%). Within the Asian/Asian British group, the Pakistani (1.9%), Indian (1.2%) and Bangladeshi (1%) groups are numerically largest. As shown in the *Gender Profile of Newcastle's Labour Market*, however, Indian men and women in Newcastle have very different characteristics from other Asian groups, with higher rates of full-time employment and higher proportions of men and

women working in senior or professional occupations, and tending to live in the more dispersed, prosperous wards of Newcastle (Buckner et al 2004).

The marked concentration of women from ethnic minority groups in certain wards, especially in the west of the city, is shown in Figure 1. In Elswick and Wingrove, the wards selected for this study, over a quarter of the population is from ethnic minority groups, and the largest of these are the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (Figure 2). Both these wards also experience some of the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation in Newcastle (Buckner et al 2004).

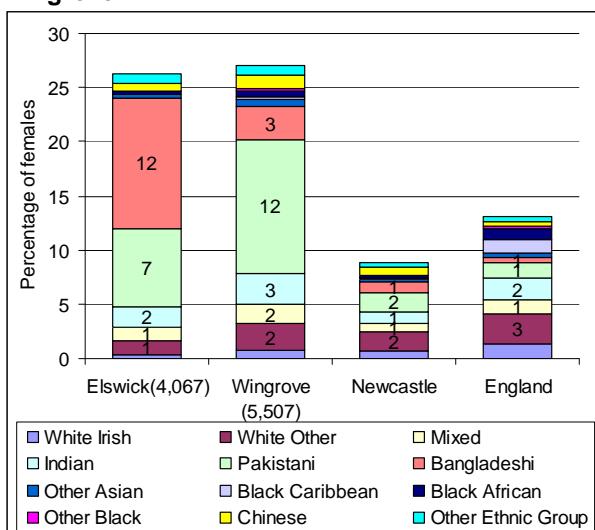
Figure 1 Distribution of ethnic minority women (non-White British) in Newcastle's wards (2001)



Source: 2001 Census Areas Statistics Theme Tables, Crown Copyright 2003, 2001 Census Output Areas, Crown Copyright 2003. This work is based on data provided through EDINA UKBORDERS with the support of the ESRC and JISC and uses boundary material which is Copyright of the Crown.

NB This map is based on 2001 ward boundaries, which have since changed.

Figure 2 Ethnic minority women in Elswick and Wingrove



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003. Crown

At the time of the 2001 Census, Bangladeshi men and women made up the largest ethnic minority group in Elswick (11% and 12% respectively), whilst the Pakistani population was the largest group in Wingrove (14% of men and 12% of women). This is in marked contrast to Newcastle and England as a whole, where Pakistanis and Bangladeshis accounted for between 1% and 2% of the total population.

Newcastle's Pakistani population is more settled than the city's Bangladeshi population. Nearly 60% of Pakistani women were British-born, with just 37% born in Pakistan. In contrast, only 45% of Newcastle's Bangladeshi women were born in the UK, while 53% were born in Bangladesh (Figure A1, Appendix 3).

Age profile

In Newcastle, both the Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations have a much younger age profile than the general population. This pattern is particularly striking in Wingrove, where 66% of all Bangladeshi females were aged 24 or under, compared with 42% of the local population.

Linked to this, only 7% of the Pakistani and just 3% of the Bangladeshi female populations in Newcastle were over state pension age, compared with 23% of all women in Newcastle (and 35% in England). Thus a high proportion of Pakistani women in Newcastle are of working age in (60%) (Figure A2, Appendix 3).

Household composition

Compared with other Newcastle households or with similar ethnic groups in England, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households in Elswick and Wingrove were much more likely to consist of married/cohabiting couples with dependent children. In Wingrove, 58% of Bangladeshi households consist of couples with dependent children, compared with just 17% of all Newcastle households. One in 5 (21%) Pakistani households in Wingrove were in the 'other households with dependent children' category, which includes extended families, compared with just 3% of all Newcastle households. (Figure A3, Appendix 3).

Employment status

Women living in the Elswick and Wingrove wards were less likely to be employed (34% and 41% respectively) than women in Newcastle (46%) and England as a whole (54%) (Figure 3). These differences were more marked for some ethnic groups. In Elswick, only 4% of Bangladeshi women were employed full-time, compared with 29% of White British women and with 38% of all women in the neighbourhood.

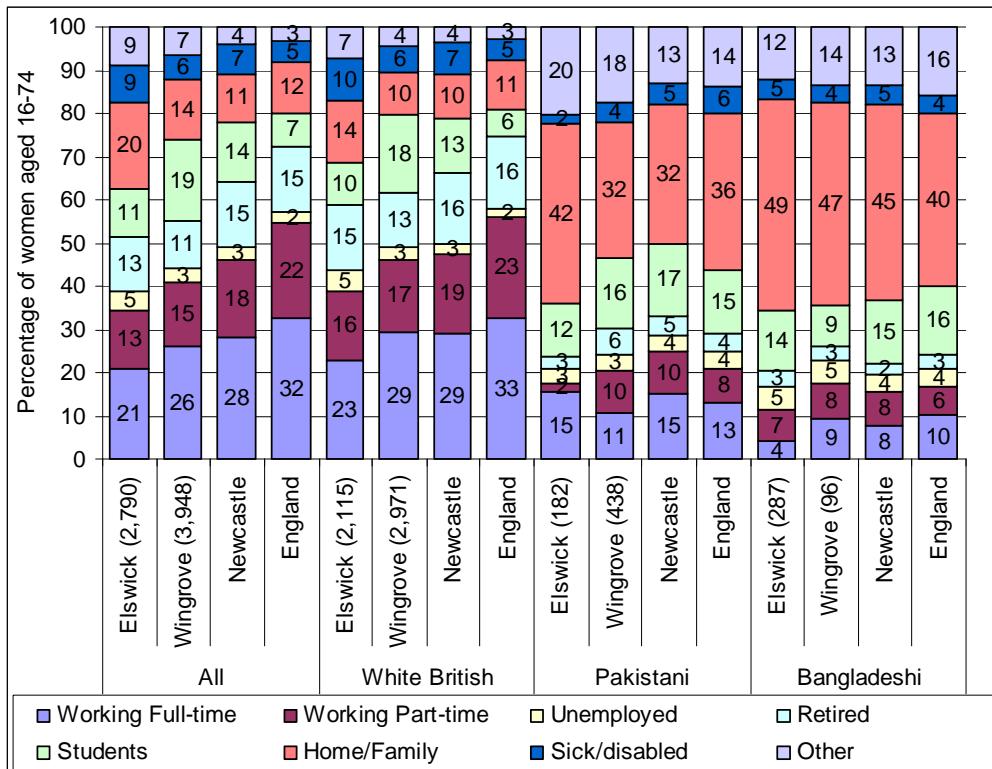
Nearly half (49%) of all Bangladeshi women in Elswick looked after their home or family full-time - a higher proportion than in England (40%) or Newcastle (45%), or than among other ethnic groups (e.g. 42% of Pakistani women) in Elswick.

As elsewhere, a comparatively high proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in these two wards in Newcastle were students (12% and 14% in Elswick and 9% and 16% in Wingrove), compared with only 7% of all women in England.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of unemployed women in selected ethnic groups, and as a percentage of economically active women in the area. It shows the very high rates of unemployment among economically active Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, which is even more marked in the two wards than at the city and national levels.

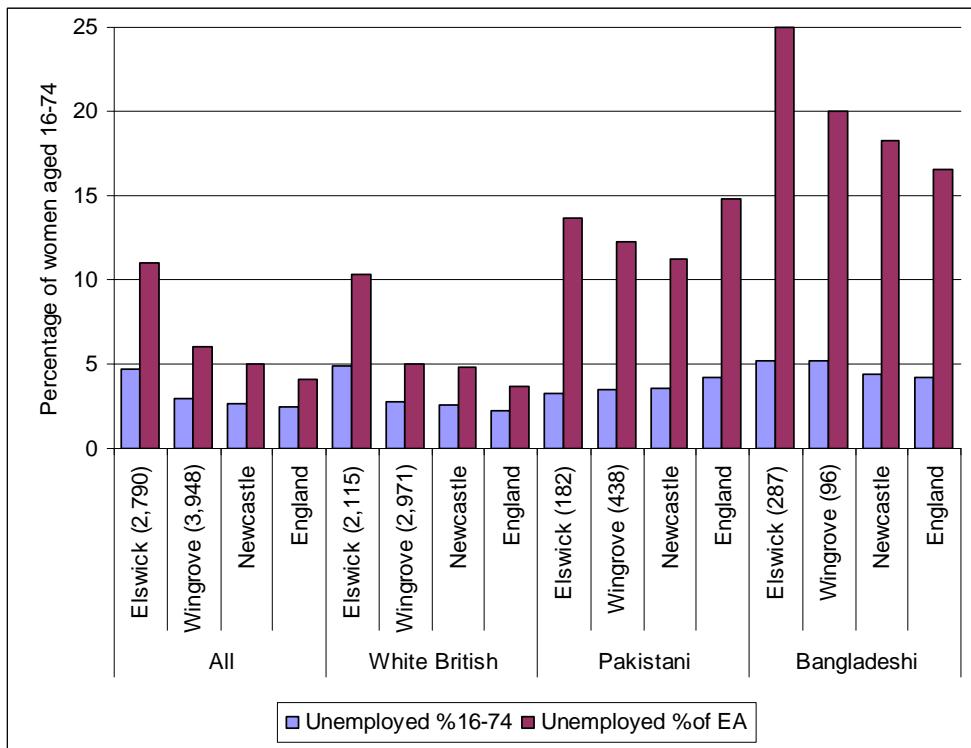
- In Elswick, 25% of economically active Bangladeshi women are unemployed, compared with just 5% of all economically active women in Newcastle as a whole.
- Unemployment rates for economically active Pakistani women in Elswick and Wingrove are also high (14% and 13%), compared with Newcastle and England as a whole (12% and 9% respectively).

Figure 3 Economic activity status of women aged 16-74 by ethnicity (selected groups)¹⁰



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 4 Unemployment among economically active women aged 16-74, selected ethnic groups



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

¹⁰ Gender and ethnicity disaggregated ward level data on economic activity rates, are only available for 16-74 year olds, and not for the working age population.

As shown elsewhere (Buckner et al, 2004), compared with other ethnic groups, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Newcastle are more likely, when in paid work, to work in sales and customer service occupations, and are less likely to work as managers, senior officials and professionals. A high proportion of women in both these ethnic groups are employed in the wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotels sector, and in the finance and real estate sector.

A high proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people¹¹ of working age in Elswick and Wingrove had no qualifications (48% of working age Bangladeshis in Elswick), compared to 24% of all people in Newcastle. (Figure A4, Appendix 3).

Local knowledge of the issues faced by ethnic minority women

To ensure that our study was also informed by up-to-date local knowledge, requests for information were sent to all key local statutory and voluntary sector organisations that provide services for ethnic minority women in Newcastle. An additional internet trawl was also conducted.

Newcastle's recent arrivals

Newcastle's ethnic minority population has grown and changed considerably since the 2001 Census, due, in large part, to the government's dispersal policy for asylum seekers and refugees. Although asylum seekers are not permitted to work until they are granted refugee status, they nonetheless make up an important element of Newcastle's ethnic minority population. Despite difficulties in accurately and consistently collecting and presenting data on these groups, available local evidence suggests that:

- In 2003, the North East was ranked 4th out of 10 regions in terms of numbers of recipients, hosting approx 12% of all dispersals. There were estimated to be 4,500 asylum seekers, plus a further 14,000 former asylum seeker refugees in the Tyne and Wear area. About half of these people were thought to be living in Newcastle. The largest refugee groups were from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Central African countries and the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. (LSC Tyne and Wear 2003). Little is known about how many remain in the city or move on.

¹¹ Census data on levels of qualifications are not available disaggregated by gender and ethnicity at ward level.

- By 2005 numbers of asylum seekers had fallen. The North East was in 6th place with 6.8% of the UK's asylum seekers. Newcastle had 1,138 asylum seekers in Home Office supported accommodation or in receipt of 'subsistence only' support. The main nationalities were Iranian, Angolan and Turkish (NERS and NECARS 2005).
- A survey by the Tyne and Wear LSC (2003) indicated that:
 - The majority of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Newcastle between 2000 and 2003 were young (20-35 years), single (two-thirds), and male (70%). Most had been in the UK and the North East for less than a year, and 80% did not have permission to work.
 - Overall, refugees and asylum seekers were a highly diverse group, with varied educational levels, employment experiences, aspirations, health, abilities, family arrangements and training and support needs. Over half could speak some English; a quarter had qualifications at Level 3 or above; and most (60%) had previously been employed/self-employed.
 - Barriers to training and employment for those entitled to access training and employment were identified as: Job Seeker Allowance rules which resulted in inappropriate training; barriers to ESOL attendance arising from travel issues; problems with childcare; and inadequate language skills.
 - Prejudice on the part of employers and the public was ranked near the bottom of the list of barriers.

This LSC survey drew little attention to the differing circumstances, skills and needs of male and female refugees and asylum-seekers, but recognised that good practice in service provision includes offering women-only classes and crèche/childcare facilities.

The evaluation of the '*Settling into Work*'¹² project highlighted the need for employers to make allowances for refugees in terms of language, personal circumstances, and time to adjust to UK

¹² A one year Intermediate Labour Market Project for refugees in the North East aimed at increasing the participation of refugees in employment

working culture (NCTC 2004). The project placed 29 refugees (of whom 8 were women) in jobs with partner companies and organisations in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. It also highlighted a number of problems and issues experienced by refugees seeking work:

- A lack of recent/relevant work experience; or problems with transferability of skills.
- Basic English does not equate to work-based language fluency.
- Non-transferability of qualifications; those individuals forced to flee suddenly have no proof of their qualifications.
- The need for refugees to re-think their work futures realistically, flexibly and creatively.
- Job placements need to be carefully matched to skills and previous qualifications.
- Refugees' anxieties about coping with new work and domestic responsibilities.
- The need to change some employers' attitudes to and perceptions of refugees.
- Refugees need help with job search, interview skills, and in preparing CVs.

Newcastle's West End

In Newcastle, the New Deal for Communities (NDC)¹³, part of the government's *Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy*, covers four areas in the west end of Newcastle, including Elswick and parts of Wingrove. Established in 1999, this partnership of local agencies, including voluntary and private sector organisations, has a budget of £55 million over 10 years to tackle the very high levels of poverty, social exclusion and worklessness in the area. Many NDC interventions link education, training and employment, allowing participants to gain qualifications and work experience, whilst also providing a service to the community or to local schools (e.g. classroom assistants).

As part of this, *First Step* offers training courses for ethnic minority women to gain recognised qualifications and possible subsequent employment. Central to the NDC's approach is the involvement of local residents in the development and continuation of projects. Research on lifelong learning projects within the NDC (including one at *First Step*), found that ethnic minority women valued and benefited from training opportunities that were: for small groups at non-threatening local venues; run by tutors who understood their background and needs;

offered crèche facilities; linked to other local agency/training provision for progression; and used a 'bottom-up approach', involving local people in the design and delivery of the projects (Kirton and Hall 2004).

In 2001, the NDC's Skills Audit of approximately 5,500 people (44% of the locality's working age population) found that:

- 42% were currently economically inactive
- 37% had not worked in the last year
- those who were employed had high levels of insecurity
- 46% were actively looking for work
- of the women: 30% were looking after their home and family full-time; 20% were paid employees; 18% were transient students; 12% were resident students; 10% were long term sick or disabled; 0% were unemployed.

The Skills Audit identified the lack of suitable childcare facilities and language skills as key barriers to training and employment for some women. Childcare was addressed through a *Sure Start* partnership which delivered 80 new day care places by 2004, 50% of which were affordable and accessible to local parents, and offered training and employment opportunities for local people. Language skills were addressed by providing an 'ESOL at Work' training package, and a 'Workfinder' project, including special provision for ethnic minority women and men.

Newcastle City Council

In the consultation on Newcastle City Council's *Corporate Equality Plan* (2004b&d) – much of which focused on recruitment and selection within the local authority – ethnic minority women's groups highlighted the following issues:

- *Ineffective advertising of vacancies to ethnic communities.* They recommended improved targeting through community press, particularly aimed to younger people.
- *Language was the main barrier to accessing local job opportunities.* Non-native English speakers felt discriminated against, even with equal qualifications.
- *Lack of training opportunities was a key obstacle to entering the workplace.* Well qualified ethnic minority applicants often lacked the necessary skills or experience for better jobs, which could be addressed by offering on-the-job training for local authority jobs.

¹³ Formally *WestGate New Deal for Communities*

- Stereotyped ideas that ethnic minorities were better suited to menial jobs, e.g. kitchen porters, even though they were well qualified and had a great deal to offer.

More generally:

- *Ethnic minorities and asylum seekers did not feel safe travelling on public transport, or when in predominately White disadvantaged areas. Many had experienced, or knew of, racial, verbal and physical abuse, harassment and attacks. These were seldom reported, as few knew how to do this, and most thought no action would result; asylum seekers feared a complaint would jeopardise their Home Office application. Suggestions included introducing diversity training for bus drivers on tackling harassment of passengers; warning notices and CCTV on buses; Street Wardens; more diversity awareness, and anti-bullying initiatives in schools.*
- *Levels of racist abuse were thought to have worsened with the recent influx of asylum seekers and refugees. This was affecting settled immigrant communities and foreign students, who were sometimes mistaken for asylum seekers.*
- *The local authority needed to be more sensitive to language, lifestyle and religious needs when trying to access or support local ethnic minority communities.*
- *Ethnic minority groups felt they were rarely consulted about issues affecting them.*

Despite this consultation (and other attempts to address issues directly with ethnic minorities), some opportunities have been missed. The *Draft Newcastle Plan 2004-7* (NCC 2004e) does not specifically identify the needs of ethnic communities, despite covering issues such as transport and safety.

There a number of examples of good practice in the local provision of support services specifically targeted at ethnic minority women. Many of these are part-funded by the local authority, or are voluntary and community led, and include:

- Newcastle's language support services for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) which delivers some women-only classes and a supported crèche.
- The *Jobs through ESOL and Training (JET)* project, - originally based in the West End and funded through NDC - now city-wide.

- The *Racial Harassment Prevention Team*, supporting victims of and witnesses to crime.
- The *Minority Ethnic Community Support Service (MECSS)* which is developing a strategy to support and deliver services to all ethnic minorities across the city.
- The *Roshni Asian Women's Association* (in Benwell ward), which mainly supports Indian women.
- The Angelou Centre (in Moorside Ward) provides skills training and personal development for Black Minority and Ethnic Women, this includes advice and guidance and job search support, and business development skills and support.
- The *Millin Centre* which offers support and educational, training and social activities to women mainly from Pakistan, India and Arabic-speaking countries, in the West End of Newcastle.
- *First Step* (detailed below).

Voluntary / community sector organisations

A number of these groups target women specifically, as well as the community in general. A review of the voluntary sector organisations addressing the needs of ethnic minorities in the North East concluded that these organisations:

provide a crucial empowering and representational role for the BME community, enabling capacity building, civic engagement, combating social exclusion and tackling issues like discrimination and racism. (BECON, 2004b:3).

However, despite increasing demands on their services, many organisations receive very meagre and short-lived funding, rely heavily on volunteers and lack adequate premises (BECON, 2004a).

First Step's Building Bridges Conference report (2002) highlighted the obstacles to opportunity for local ethnic minority women living in the West End:

- Demand for ESOL and basic skills education still exceeds supply, with formal providers reporting waiting lists for courses.
- Most providers are aware of the needs for 'additional support' to enable access to learning (defined by the women as childcare/crèche places, translators and interpreters, learning resources in relevant

- community languages, and subsidised transport), but lacked the funds for these.
- Difficulties for women in accessing centre-based provision, highlighting the need for an extensive home-based, out-reach services.

In *First Step's* survey of 50 course participants, women were asked: '*What do you think prevents other women from your community from taking part in learning activities?*' The main answers were:

- Language difficulties: 42%
- Not enough crèche/ childcare provision: 38%
- A lack of confidence: 34%
- Travel costs or other problems with transportation: 26%
- Anti-education pressure from spouse, family and community: 18%
- Poor information/no knowledge of available services: 12%
- Nothing: 10%

When asked about the benefits of taking part in learning activities, most identified improved communication skills (70%); increased confidence (66%); better access to information and services (56%); increased skills and knowledge (36%); ability to help children with schoolwork (20%); and access to employment and training opportunities (12%)¹⁴. The report concluded that:

access to appropriate learning provision for immigrant women in Newcastle is difficult and fragmented. The statutory sector, while providing a comprehensive service, has very little learning support in terms of access to crèche, interpreters, one-to-one support, learning resources in the relevant community languages, a safe physical environment that takes account of cultural and ideological pressures and little understanding of working at community level. (First Step 2002:80).

First Step's project has been identified as a rare, but effective, example of an organisation that explicitly addresses the needs of ethnic minority women – a highly sensitive issue in an area of extreme social disadvantage where visible minorities often provide an easy target for the

¹⁴ That only 12% identified access to employment and training as a benefit to their learning activities highlights the fact that most of *First Step's* participants are some considerable distance from the labour market. Improved communication skills and confidence, access to information etc, are some of the barriers they need to overcome before training and employment become realistic possibilities for them.

resentment of White residents, and where racism is a common, and very under-reported experience (Lall and Gillborn 2004).

The concerns and aspirations of ethnic minority women

To understand more about the complexity of ethnic minority women's circumstances and experiences, we provided positive, arts-based opportunities for women to reflect on, and represent: their skills and aspirations; their past achievements and experiences; the role of paid and unpaid work in their lives; the mismatch between their skills and employment opportunities; and the support they needed to overcome the barriers they still faced.

As part of the research, a series of arts workshops were held one day a week for twelve weeks, in the spring/summer of 2005 at *First Step's* women's community centre. These were facilitated by resident artists working with the research themes, using poetry, art and video/digital art (Appendix 2).

Twelve local women from different ethnic minority backgrounds attended the arts workshops. They included mainly Muslim women from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, many of whom were transient or recent arrivals to Newcastle. Three additional focus groups with 35 other women were also conducted to include the perspectives of the local 'settled' community of ethnic minority women who are eligible to work (Appendix 2).

Most of the women involved in the arts workshops and focus groups were first generation migrants to the UK, at some distance from the labour market because of their ESOL needs and limited UK work experience. The issues reported here are therefore not necessarily representative of the wider diversity of *all* ethnic minority women living and working locally or in Newcastle.

The issues raised during the arts workshops and focus groups are expressed through the women's own words, their individual and group poetry (Appendix 2), and their artwork (in the form of 'Mandalas' – or 'clocks of life' showing the major events and milestones in their past, present and future lives). These are used to illustrate this report.

Barriers and sources of disadvantage

- English language skills

*Before I had this language,
Everything was alien,
Grasping at odd words:
Hello, OK, Why Aye*

(From 'Breakfast' - composite group poem,
Poetry workshop)

However transient or permanent their residence was, all the women felt that learning English was vital for everyday life (shopping, talking to neighbours, gaining information and services). All were highly motivated to improve their language skills. Poor English skills were seen as the primary barrier to improving their qualifications and gaining employment. Several women expressed frustration with their limited access to free ESOL classes, citing long waiting lists or the 3 year residency eligibility rule for some recent immigrant groups. Women reported that without access to opportunities to improve skills, confidence and social contact in the first 3 years after arrival, many recent immigrant women they knew had become socially isolated, depressed and had lost the motivation to integrate and succeed in the UK.

- Limited employability - lack or non-recognition of qualifications, skills and experience

*Sometimes my skills dissolve in the
grey
Eroded and worn away,
They melt like wax, distorted then
reformed
And then I'm lost again -
This room is a prison as well as a
palace.*

(From untitled composite group poem,
Poetry workshop)

A graduate biochemist, accountant and teacher all felt that their prior qualifications and professional skills were not recognised by local employers. One woman had been frustrated by the time taken to receive support with accrediting her professional qualifications in the UK. None

had been able to secure even low paid, unqualified positions in the same sectors since their arrival. Women recognised that their other skills were worthless unless they had language abilities to match.

- Local area infrastructure – poverty, support services, opportunities

Most women liked living in the West End because of the ethnic diversity, shops, community support services and social networks in place. This diversity was thought to make the area safer for Muslim women to live, with many women from outside the area travelling across the city to access these services. Women were generally more aware of community-based support services that had been recommended to them, and less knowledgeable about other statutory services (e.g. those provided through the local authority, or Jobcentres).

- Childcare

Improved access to local crèches and nurseries in recent years had been crucial in enabling women to access training and employment opportunities. Not all extended family members were willing to 'babysit' to allow the mother to attend courses or work, and others had few relatives or limited informal networks to support them. Some women preferred to use registered childminders, but few were listed locally.

- Suitable job opportunities

Most women were considering traditional female occupations that provided local, family-friendly routes into jobs. The women felt that local employers did not want part-time workers, or that the part-time jobs available did not suit their need for child-friendly hours (9.30-2.30pm). They wanted part-time work in their local area (often defined as within walking distance or a short bus ride from their home or children's nursery/school), that used the skills they already had through their bi-lingual skills, caring roles or voluntary work. This restricted most women to considering childcare-related jobs (teaching assistants, crèche workers), language support work (translators, tutors), or evening office cleaning work that did not challenge their language skills. Some were disappointed that the local factory jobs were lost, as these had provided low-skilled, part-time or flexible work for many women, without the need to improve their English skills.

- *Limited aspirations and/or confidence to face new challenges*

Some were highly motivated to continue training until they re-qualified in their previous professions (e.g. accounting, bio-chemistry, and teaching), after acquiring the necessary English language competence. Few had explored other opportunities, or had the knowledge or confidence to pursue occupations outside the realms of their direct experience. Some women had progressed well through the ESOL levels, education and training – often gaining advanced qualifications (up to Masters degree), but had experienced difficulties in finding employment at this level. At this point, some became resigned to working beneath their previous skill level and potential. Overcoming fear, isolation and depression to gain the confidence to do something new, was a re-current theme. This impetus got the women out of the house and into local centres, for classes and social contact. For some, this achievement and their growing confidence pushed them towards training, voluntary work and eventually paid work. However, the constant battle against fading confidence, set-backs and feeling ‘out of their depth’ never left some women, no matter how far they had progressed. They understood that competition even for low-paid, unskilled jobs was fierce, and that without impeccable English, qualifications and experience, they would always be disadvantaged. One young graduate, whose parents were from Pakistan, had high aspirations, but the experience of ‘stepping into the unknown’ was still uncomfortable and socially isolating:

I don't feel any family pressure in going to university. I just went to school and did well and went to uni. All this aspiration - aspiration of doing well, to go to uni. I am lucky to have the opportunity and to get a good full-time education and everything. In my course in university, I'm the only ethnic minority student. There are foreign students, but for students in England, they are all White, and I'm the only Asian student. It was quite an alienating experience. I didn't get along well with people. In Newcastle Uni. There are quite a lot of very posh people - I didn't get along with a lot of students. I didn't like it. I tried to, but I couldn't mix with the majority of the students. I made a couple of friends, but groups of students stuck together - they are from very rich families. I really don't like that.

Some of these sentiments were also expressed in a poem written in the poetry workshops:

*My war is unreported
 I'm written off, invisible,
 They listen but do not hear.
 I am a captive,
 My days filled with dreams of escape
 Anger palpitating my raging heart,
 I plan alternatives in my head
 The whens and hows buzzing like
 flies,
 Still unclear, but there at least -
 An impetus for moving on.*

(From ‘Captive’ – Poetry workshop)

- *Cultural or family expectations and circumstances*

Personal circumstances and family or cultural expectations varied greatly. Some women had difficult domestic circumstances - heavy caring responsibilities, unsupportive husbands, or controlling extended families - but still tried to find ways around the restrictions placed on their freedom outside the home. They felt torn between their personal wishes and the ‘hypocritical expectations’ of culture and family. For most women, ‘getting out of the house’ was important and necessary for their mental well-being. Others had husbands or children who encouraged their developing new skills, interests and income-generating opportunities. Some wives and mothers felt that looking after their home and family was respected and highly valued - by them and by their families. For some, the stress and energy of a job threatened this, whilst for others employment would be of secondary importance and only considered if it fitted in easily with childcare and household commitments.

One divorced mother described how the breakdown of her violent marriage (represented by a ‘big scary monster’ on the left of the Mandala in Figure 5) gave her the strength to achieve her life’s ambition to be a teacher, researcher and writer, which she was working towards, despite the struggle of bringing up her sons alone. She also described how her Muslim culture values humility and modesty, which makes the self-promotional ‘selling yourself’ on application forms or in interviews, very alien and difficult for her and many other women she knows.

Figure 5 Mandala showing one woman's 'circles of life' – her achievements, obstacles overcome and hopes for the future, but also the centrality of her children



Another woman described working full-time on two part-time jobs for two weeks, then had to resign because:

It was a disaster. I nearly ended up dead, like someone took the life out of me, I was crying, everything, so stressed.

Others in the group listened in disbelief, expressing surprise that she ever thought working full-time with children was achievable.

Figure 6 Mandala showing one woman's ultimate 'flight to freedom' through choice and growth; overcoming fears; and the growth of her future plans and ambitions (depicted as leaves)



- *Benefit trap*

Most had found learning about the benefits they were entitled to a complicated and confusing process. As most local job opportunities are low-paid, coming off benefits and entering paid work was a risky proposition that most could not contemplate without significant support. These issues are also raised in other studies that form part of this research – *Connecting Women to the Local Labour Market* (Grant et al 2006) and *Women, Poverty and Regeneration*, which includes a study in Newcastle's East End (Escott et al 2006).

- *Discrimination, racism and Islamophobia*

There was widespread experience of racism (verbal and physical attack) and discrimination (by employers and service providers) – on the street, on public transport, in job applications and at interview. Many felt unsafe on the street and highly vulnerable to unfair treatment, particularly Muslim women wearing the hijab. This hostility had worsened since the London bombings in July 2005, which they believed had further reduced their chances of securing employment with a White employer. Those whose English was poor had no confidence in reporting or challenging these behaviours, and their experiences had led to them avoid such situations:

He was shouting at me: 'people like you shouldn't be in this country', shouting abuse at me. The bus was full, but everyone went silent and everyone heard and I felt so small. I could feel everybody was staring at me, but no-one said anything to him. I couldn't wait to get off the bus, and I will never use the bus at that time (peak/rush hour) again. I will never, ever put myself in that position again.

Why do they ask your race or ethnicity on application forms? – if you tick it, they have another reason not to interview you. Or they see your name.

Or in the interview they ask you ‘why did you come (to this country?’). You answer their question, then they ask you more questions about how, when, why. They never ask me about my experience or my skills – just about why I’m here. They said you’ll hear in 2 weeks, but you never hear from them again.

The following excerpt from a poem written jointly by the women conveys their feelings of powerlessness and frustration when confronted with these experiences:

*But I feel like a foreigner every day
Living in the tide of your superiority,
your insecurity,
Your arrogance and ignorance.
Once, I believed in democracy, in hope
Now I trade in opposites
Here, I am wordless, useless, minuscule,
Anger consuming me like a fever.
I am reduced to a number, a thing,
A subject in someone else's drama.*

(From untitled poem – Poetry workshop)

Enablers or motivators

The women had also found a range of things had helped them overcome some of the barriers and disadvantages of their situation, and enabled and motivated them to progress, in spite of these hurdles.

• Children's educational needs

A number of mothers (particularly from South America) wanted more support from schools, so that they could better support their children's education. Many children were having difficulties at school, and mothers were frustrated by their poor English and lack of knowledge of the educational system. This was a motivating factor, encouraging them to acquire skills and knowledge (Figure 7). One mother attended a short course run by the university to 'help your child with maths':

Now I can help her with her homework and she is doing better. She now gets good help at school, but I had to try really hard to get her help in English, maths and different subjects.

It's very difficult to understand the system. I need more information about the exams and college and jobs. Every teacher says, 'He's OK, he's OK' (at parents evening), but then he fails his exams and we don't know what to do. It's like they don't expect him to pass. He needs to get exams to go to university, but he needs more help, but they say he's ok. As a mother I am concerned about that.

• Voluntary work

Voluntary work was seen as a very good way to acquire work experience and language and other skills, as well as providing social contact. This built confidence and provided another mechanism for extending their lives beyond home. Most found out about voluntary work opportunities through the *First Step* tutors, or through other centres they attended. As some women improved their English skills, they volunteered as interpreters and translators in community settings, using their bilingual skills to help others 'in their situation'.

Figure 7 Mandala, with feathers depicting this woman's four children and glass beads representing their education. For this woman, learning and education are also important to her plans to graduate in future



Others had volunteered at their children's school and approached teachers to ask them how to become more involved in their child's education. For one woman, this had led to a childcare qualification and part-time employment as a classroom assistant and crèche worker. Others saw voluntary work as a good and often necessary lead into paid work.

• Support network – social contact, encouragement, advice and information

In addition to attending courses, many had been coming to the community-based centres for help and advice on a wide range of issues for a number of years. The courses gave them something to look forward to and structured their week, particularly when children were at school. For those with pre-school children, the on-site crèche provided safe social and play opportunities for their children, whilst allowing

their mothers opportunities to learn. These centres form an important social support network for women who find it difficult to access other 'less friendly' statutory services, or who do not yet have the confidence to attend college courses:

It's like a big family where you get advise, meet and speak to people in your own language, and get whatever help you need.

Evidence from this research indicated that centres like *First Step* provide critical services in the form of accessible help, information and contacts needed for ethnic minority women's integration into life, training and employment in Newcastle's local labour market (Figure 8). The growing waiting list of this organisation suggests that the demand for their services exceeds supply.

Figure 8 *First Step* (represented in yellow) was an important part of this woman's Mandala – enabling her art and language skills to develop, and opening up future possibilities for a job (previously a nurse), or university



Key points and recommendations

Women's disadvantage arises from their:

- *Local area:* entrenched poverty; limited suitable local job opportunities, weaknesses in the support infrastructure, including childcare, public transport and other services.
- *Migration history:* settlement patterns, residency status, whether first or subsequent generations
- *Language skills:* this affects women's confidence, motivation, employment aspirations and their ability to access information and support services
- *Lack of work experience in the UK:* this limits access to employment opportunities
- *Cultural and personal/family circumstances:* These are highly variable within and between ethnic groups; can be both barriers to and enabling factors; generally high value placed on home/family.
- Experiences of racial harassment and perceptions of threatening places (e.g. local buses).

Evidence gathered for this study suggests that there are several examples of local good practice that support ethnic minority women in moving closer to the labour market. Nevertheless, very substantial challenges remain for this growing and changing community. These challenges can be addressed by developing closer partnership working among local agencies, to better understand these diverse needs and to improve support and provision.

For voluntary/community sector organisations and funders

- *Extension of ESOL/English-language support:* Free access to courses should be extended and offered in community-based centres which provide formal and informal opportunities to develop skills and confidence in a safe environment, linked with basic skills/IT to enhance employability. It is critical that this provision is culturally and gender sensitive. This provision also needs to have crèche facilities (preferably on-site) and be accessible to recent arrivals who can evidence their intention to remain in the UK.
- *Increased access to longer-term funding,* to support the work of locally-based, community-

focused organisations, with a track-record in meeting the needs of ethnic minority women. These centres successfully engage hard-to-reach groups, by building their trust, increasing their skills, confidence and employability, and bringing them closer to the labour market. They offer 'value-added' by encouraging women's self-help and independence, as participants progress from 'beneficiaries' to volunteers.

- *Increased provision of personal development and confidence-building courses and activities:* Arts-based/creative activities can be highly positive and empowering, without over-reliance on verbal communication skills. Group activities further enhance mutual understanding and shared experiences.
- *Accreditation of voluntary experience:* to enhance employability and offer step-wise, tiered and tailored progression (from volunteering and training into paid work).

For employers/employers' organisations

- *Improved recognition of prior qualifications and skills gained abroad* (building on existing schemes): Employer awareness needs to be raised by challenging misconceptions and assumptions about particular groups, and recognising that prior experience and motivation to work can be an indication of potential.
- *Development of opportunities for bi-lingual support volunteers and paid staff in public and private sector organisations:* e.g. health, social services, and service sector employers who have ethnic minority customers/clients with language support needs (e.g. building on the JET project).
- *Work placement and on-the-job training opportunities:* tasters of alternative/non-traditional opportunities; opportunities to gain experience and 'a foot-in-the-door'.
- *Staff management, career progression and staff development support* that are encouraging and sensitive to individual need: e.g. understands that lack of confidence can hamper performance and progression.
- *Designing local part-time jobs* that fit the availability of working mothers and benefit rules.

- *Advertise vacancies in targeted local community settings and press/media.*

For Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, careers-related services and training organisations

- *Improved access to careers advice:* Tailored to women from different backgrounds, with varied experience and aspirations. Advice and guidance on short, medium and longer-term goals. Information on alternative/non-traditional employment and training options, matched to local skills gaps, employers, and job opportunities.
- *Access to pre-interview/job-preparation support and coaching* in schools, colleges and elsewhere, on: job-search skills, CV writing, applications, and interview skills. Recognition that 'self-promotion' in applications and interviews is a cultural barrier for some groups, and may require specific, targeted coaching. Sign-posting to other support/provision.
- *Improved local information, advice and guidance:* On employment, training, the education system, benefits etc, in community languages or with community language support. Improved outreach by JobCentre Plus and community organisations, to bring mainstream support, local jobs and information to local women.
- *Targeted support to tackle barriers experienced by unemployed ethnic minority women* e.g. for Bangladeshi and Pakistani women seeking work through JobCentre Plus. Their much higher levels of unemployment in certain areas suggest that entrenched disadvantage and discrimination still persist.
- *Design formal accreditation mechanisms that value and recognise practical competences and skills,* rather than just formal academic qualifications.

For local authorities and other local service providers

- *Better support to tackle racism and discrimination:* awareness raising and information for the local population, through schools/colleges, local media and employers. Anti-racist, diversity training for service providers and employers (e.g. transport; recruitment panels). Heightened profile of the work/policies/actions taken by Street

Wardens, police, Victim Support and other agencies in combating racism. Initiatives to encourage reporting of incidents. Focus on safer, family-friendly transport - with specific measures to combat racism.

- *Improved access to childcare:* Culturally sensitive, affordable or subsidised community-based provision (registered childminders, nurseries, on-site crèches) to support course attendance, training, volunteering activities and paid work. More help and advice on becoming a childminder.
- *Encourage more parental involvement in schools:* Community links/support through schools (e.g. holistic Sure Start-type support for primary and secondary school pupils), so that parents can better support their children's education (with homework, exams, accessing further and higher education and careers advice). Provide tailored support and advice for parents of EAL children, and more volunteering opportunities for parents in top primary and secondary classes. Offer special parent's evenings for EAL parents (with interpreters) on the education/exam system, teaching methods, etc.
- *Better targeting and promotion of information and support services to ethnic minority women* through trusted community links (organisations, events, workers, volunteers), capitalising on informal communication mechanisms.
- *Improved monitoring data and targeting of services for specific and cross-cutting groups* (e.g. different ethnic minority women – not just separate data on men/women and different ethnic groups). Guidance for organisations on how they can meet multi-layered/multiple needs.
- *Build on good practice from the local NDC:* Mainstreaming initiatives and rolling out most effective provision to other, similar areas.
- *Mainstream equalities/diversity policies:* Across all statutory, voluntary and private sector provision/services (this will be necessary from 2007 when the public duty to promote gender equality is in place).
- *Positively encourage and promote ethnic minority women's representation and participation in local decision making and governance bodies* (e.g. as local councillors, on Boards, and in other ways) to enable local change.

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Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets

The *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* project was funded, between September 2003 and August 2006, by a core European Social Fund grant to Professor Sue Yeandle and her research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion*, Sheffield Hallam University. The award was made from within ESF Policy Field 5 Measure 2, 'Gender and Discrimination in Employment'. The grant was supplemented with additional funds and resources provided by a range of partner agencies, notably the Equal Opportunities Commission, the TUC, and 12 English local authorities.

The GELLM project output comprises:

- new statistical analysis of district-level labour market data, led by Dr Lisa Buckner, producing separate **Gender Profiles** of the local labour markets of each of the participating local authorities (Buckner, Tang and Yeandle 2004, 2005, 2006) - available from the local authorities concerned and at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi
- 6 **Local Research Studies**, each involving between three and six of the project's local authority partners. Locality and Synthesis reports of these studies, published spring-summer 2006 are available at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi. Details of other publications and presentations relating to the GELLM programme are also posted on this website.
 1. *Working below potential: women and part-time work*, led by Dr Linda Grant and part-funded by the EOC (first published by the EOC in 2005)
 2. *Connecting women with the labour market*, led by Dr Linda Grant
 3. *Ethnic minority women and access to the labour market*, led by Bernadette Stiell
 4. *Women's career development in the local authority sector in England* led by Dr Cinnamon Bennett
 5. *Addressing women's poverty: local labour market initiatives* led by Karen Escott
 6. *Local challenges in meeting demand for domiciliary care* led from autumn 2005 by Professor Sue Yeandle and prior to this by Anu Suokas

The GELLM Team

Led by Professor Sue Yeandle, the members of the GELLM research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion* are: Dr Cinnamon Bennett, Dr Lisa Buckner, Ian Chesters (administrator), Karen Escott, Dr Linda Grant, Christopher Price, Lucy Shipton, Bernadette Stiell, Anu Suokas (until autumn 2005), and Dr Ning Tang. The team is grateful to Dr Pamela Fisher for her contribution to the project in 2004, and for the continuing advice and support of Dr Chris Gardiner.

The GELLM Partnership

The national partners supporting the GELLM project are the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC. The project's 12 local authority partners are: Birmingham City Council, the London Borough of Camden, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Leicester City Council, Newcastle City Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Somerset County Council, the London Borough of Southwark, Thurrock Council, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and West Sussex County Council. The North East Coalition of Employers has also provided financial resources via Newcastle City Council. The team is grateful for the support of these agencies, without which the project could not have been developed. The GELLM project engaged Professor Damian Grimshaw, Professor Ed Fieldhouse (both of Manchester University) and Professor Irene Hardill (Nottingham Trent University), as external academic advisers to the project team, and thanks them for their valuable advice and support.

Appendix 2 Research methods

This study used a mixed method research design, incorporating:

- Detailed analysis of the 2001 Census
- A review of local information and intelligence using documentary analysis
- Qualitative research with local ethnic minority women

Analysis of the 2001 Census

Data from the 2001 Census relating to women resident in the wards were analysed for particular ethnic minority groups. This included:

- Background information - population size, age-sex profile, country of birth, household composition
- Economic activity - full-time/part-time employment, unemployment, economic inactivity, Local labour market - occupation and industry for women currently in employment

If possible, data were supplied for women of working age (16-59), however, in some cases, Census output was only available for women aged 16-74. For level of highest qualification, it was possible to obtain data by age, but not by sex, so information is provided for both men and women aged 16-64/59 combined.

Review of local information and intelligence

The lead officer at Newcastle City Council requested relevant information from local statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations in the city who deal with, support or collect data on, ethnic minority women. These included sections of the local authority (e.g. Equality and Diversity, Corporate policy, Community Development, Economic Regeneration), the LSC, local colleges, Jobcentre Plus/DWP, as well as voluntary and community groups. These sources were supplemented by a trawl of relevant national policy and academic literature, and the internet.

Qualitative methodology: art-based workshops

These innovative workshops enabled women participants to use a range of art forms to creatively represent images of their lives, whilst evidencing their aspirations, skills and capabilities. The women also identified barriers to employment / job progression which affected them, and their support needs. The workshops produced detailed qualitative data relating to the women's:

- Views, preferences and values regarding child-care, caring, and employment;
- Existing experience, skills, capacities and qualifications;
- Personal choices, and how these are influenced by cultural/ family expectations;
- Local barriers to employment such as transport, childcare, education & discrimination.

The art-based approach was a way of attracting the women to a research experience that was confidence-enhancing and interactive, but not wholly reliant on their verbal skills and confidence. It was also an alternative means of tapping into, and expressing, their life experiences and stories. The informal and interactive workshop ethos enabled trust and rapport to develop between attendees and encouraged everyone to join in – often ‘doing’ the art while also talking and sharing experiences, building up snippets of each others’ stories over time. Participants were reassured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained – their work, images or words would only be used with their informed consent.

The artists developed the work with the women participants over 3 blocks of 3-4 weeks, with the researchers attending the final session of each block to observe, participate and talk to the women informally about their art work and the issues that emerged for them. An officer working in the City Council *Workfinder* project also attended a number of sessions as a participant observer.

Workshop participants

12 local women from a range of ethnic backgrounds were recruited from the centre's existing database of members. They included mainly Muslim women from the Middle East, Africa and Asia (e.g. Iranian, Iraqi, Libyan, Saudi Arabian, Sudanese, Thai, and Pakistani). Aged between 21 and 48 years old, all were born abroad and included wives, and a daughter of postgraduate and postdoctoral students or diplomats, based

in Newcastle for just a few years. Some were recent refugees or asylum seekers awaiting the Home Office's decision or work permits; others were recent brides of British born Asian husbands. Most had done ESOL, or non-accredited courses, and some voluntary work (most often associated with the local community centres they attended). Two had attended higher education institutions in their home country, and others had a range of prior professional and other work experience before arriving in the UK. Most came from professional and middle class backgrounds in their home country. Not all of the women wanted to work, or were legally entitled to do so. Some were dependent on benefits. Eight of the women had dependent children, and two were lone parents.

Focus group participants

In order to explore the issues facing the local 'settled' community of ethnic minority women who are eligible to work in more detail, three additional focus groups with a total of 35 women were conducted in collaboration with 'Workfinder'. These women were mainly foreign-born Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, South Americans (Columbia, Uruguay, and Chilean), Libyan, and Zimbabwean, aged between 18 and 48, and had been settled in the UK for between 1 and 27 years. Almost half were currently doing, or had previously done, some voluntary work. Nearly two thirds had some paid work experience – mainly part-time, (either currently or in the past – in the UK or abroad). Voluntary and work experience mainly focused on traditional female occupations – childcare, tutor/ teacher /teaching assistant. Nearly all had attended courses or training, ranging from non accredited/non-vocational classes, ESOL, IT to NVQ 3. Two were university graduates in their home country, and one was a second generation Pakistani, recently graduated from a local university. Most had either arrived in the UK as married dependents, been granted refugee status after fleeing their home country, or as young brides of Asian British men. Most were living with their husbands and children. One young woman arrived as a child refugee.

Examples of poetry produced in the workshops

Untitled composite group poem –

Today is a good day,
Things to do,
To busy my head,
Remove the boredom.

Sometimes I think too much,
Stuck in the past, trapped like a fly.
The carpet is heavy underfoot, like
treacle,
The same stuff again and again.

It's like I'm picking at a wound -
Finding strange comfort in sadness,
My life is empty,
My family, a million miles from here -
And everyone else's life looks better -
Question and blame wriggling in my skull
like centipedes.

Before I had this language,
Everything was alien,
Grasping at odd words:
Hello, OK, Why Aye

I don't like to cry
I'm scared it won't stop.
Today though, a salt tear creeps into my
mouth,
My eyes like poached eggs
And sleep is a friend who never calls.

Lost in myself, to myself,
Busy with nothing,
The world a blur,
Hunger forgotten,
Oblivious to other people's needs.

Sometimes my skills dissolve in the grey
Eroded and worn away,
They met like wax, distorted then
reformed
And then I'm lost again -
This room is a prison as well as a
palace.

Don't think, just do,
Plenty of time to be sad when I'm old.

The hideous pottery duck
Stares at me from the mantle-piece
A pile of unpaid bills beside the telly,
A layer of dust,
Reminders of things to do.
There are scary faces in the curtains,
Every flower transforms into an evil eye
And there are vibrant colours where the
mirror used to be.
My half-read book lies supplicate by the
bed

Tonight, insomnia will visit like an old
friend

Only fear and shoot 'em ups
Can shock my heart to life.

When the sky is dirty, I think of home;
Darband's vibrant cafes
Buzzing with youth and promises,
Familiar accents and laughter
Spilling down the mountain like an
avalanche.

I miss my friend's warm faces
The melody of Arabic
The beautiful chaos of weddings and
feasts,
Belonging, my family together,
The memories and mischief,
The monuments of my childhood,
Even my mother's endless nagging.

Sometimes I wonder,
If I die, who would find me?
If I die, who would know?

Breakfast

(Composite group poem - excerpt)

[...]

The air is a cocktail of post-rain
sweetness and Daz,
Fresh bread and car-fumes.

Voluptuous trees move in rhythmic waves:
Another chorus from the brood:

"Where's my jumper?"

"Where's my keys?"

"Where's my phone?"

"Where's my books?"

PE kits, packed lunches,
Dinner money and bank cards,
Dirty teeth and toilet trips,
An endless list endorsing their
reliance.

And me, super-woman, super-mam,
An octopus juggling our lives
Like a manic circus jester.

In my head I'm on a beach,
Hot sand massaging my feet,
The tepid sea singing her hypnotic
lullaby,
Flying fish show off,
Twist and turn in the aqua marine,
A gentle breeze caresses,
Strokes my hair.
A song-bird opera,
Soft music high above the roses
The sun warming my bones,
Warming my heart.

Untitled poem (excerpt) – Iranian mother of two, former teacher

Tehran tempted us back: a pilgrimage of
family and opportunity
The electricity of the big city, my home
a school,
English words flapping about like doves
My heart glowing with joy and pride
I bloom, confident as a ruby rose
Brimming with life, tall as a mountain.

Pressures grow and I crave the past
The security of status, of identity
I feel an emptiness, like a derelict
temple
Slowly dissolving back to dust.

This new life offers us promise and hope
Things will change, we will change,
Re-learn the smiles and happiness
Re-learn to like myself.

Not all promises come true -
But still I grow, re-born
Dreams rekindled, re-found
My journey continues

Captive

My war is unreported
I'm written off, invisible,
They listen but do not hear.

I am a captive,
My days filled with dreams of escape
Anger palpitating my raging heart,
I plan alternatives in my head
The whens and hows buzzing like flies,
Still unclear, but there at least -
An impetus for moving on.

Boundaries exist to be broken,
Pushed or questioned -
Determination grows in me like a fire
My will putting down her roots like a
great oak
A desire to be - to be me.
And hope gives us wings
An expectation carrying us to a better
place.

Untitled

The past has taught me
And I have learnt
I know that thinking and working are
real
That freedom and choice are real,
Achievable - that I am allowed an
opinion, a voice,
That my blood is red like yours.

But I feel like a foreigner every day
Living in the tide of your superiority,
your insecurity,
Your arrogance and ignorance.
Once, I believed in democracy, in hope
Now I trade in opposites
Here, I am wordless, useless, minuscule,
Anger consuming me like a fever.
I am reduced to a number, a thing,
A subject in someone else's drama.

This fight can not be lost
This quest for choice and freedom must
go on.
Like chasing stars or searching for the
end of the sky
We must keep looking or we die!

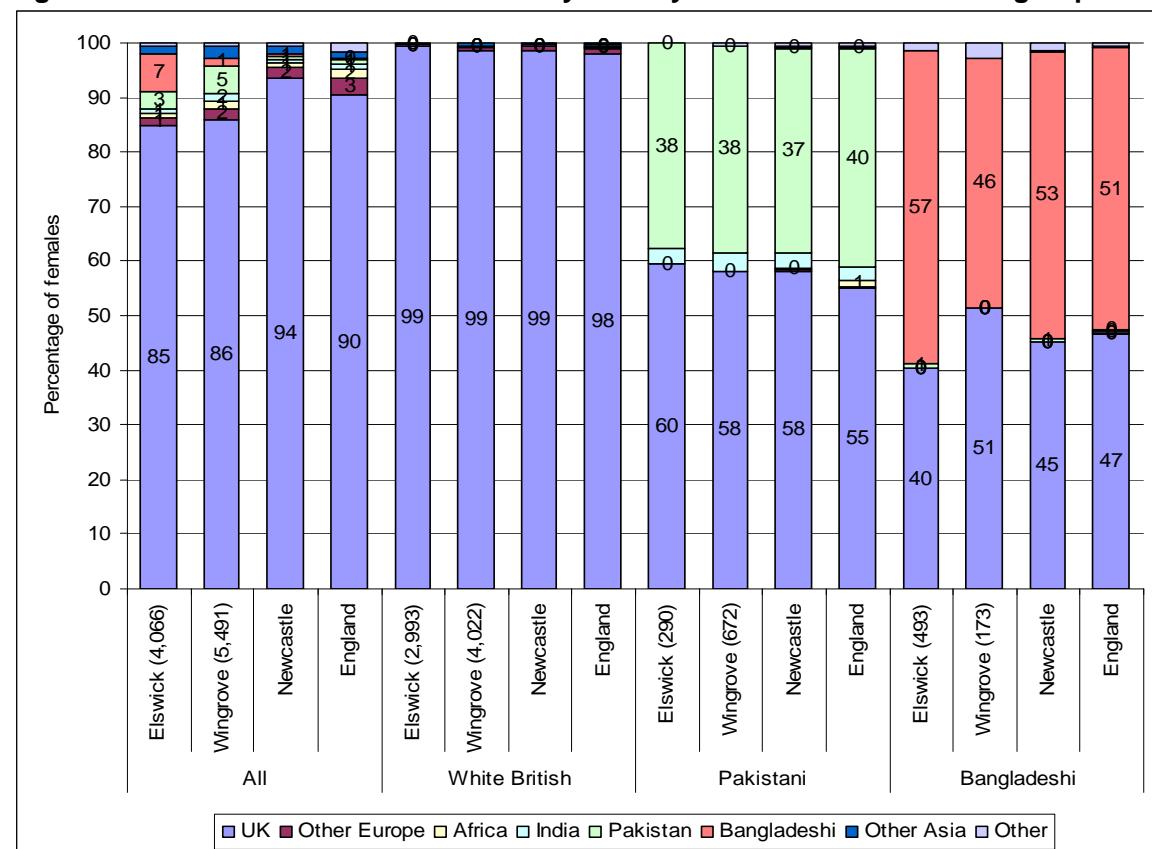
Appendix 3 Further informational about ethnic minority women in the locality

Table A1 Residents in the selected Newcastle wards, by ethnicity

	Elswick		Wingrove		Newcastle		England	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
ALL PEOPLE	4,067	4,067	5,092	5,507	125,490	134,059	23,922,144	25,216,687
White British	2,870	3,001	3,592	4,022	113,062	122,197	20,828,644	21,918,492
Whit Irish	27	14	32	43	856	879	294,061	330,054
White Other	81	52	135	131	2,367	2,325	608,873	699,237
White and Black Caribbean	15	9	6	19	226	178	113,045	118,379
White and Black African	10	6	28	18	215	192	37,558	38,940
White and Asian	27	20	45	43	448	461	92,600	91,414
Other Mixed	12	18	13	22	292	284	73,201	78,236
Indian	74	73	144	158	1,563	1,537	511,204	517,342
Pakistani	330	295	710	673	2,470	2,373	358,043	348,496
Bangladeshi	462	492	164	173	1,287	1,321	138,972	136,422
Other Asian	45	11	47	38	524	303	130,138	107,672
Black Caribbean	0	0	6	9	70	63	259,881	301,365
Black African	19	13	23	30	411	331	229,103	246,835
Other Black	0	0	15	15	39	43	45,300	50,024
Chinese	33	29	56	65	943	928	105,913	114,768
Other Ethnic Group	62	34	76	48	717	644	95,608	119,011

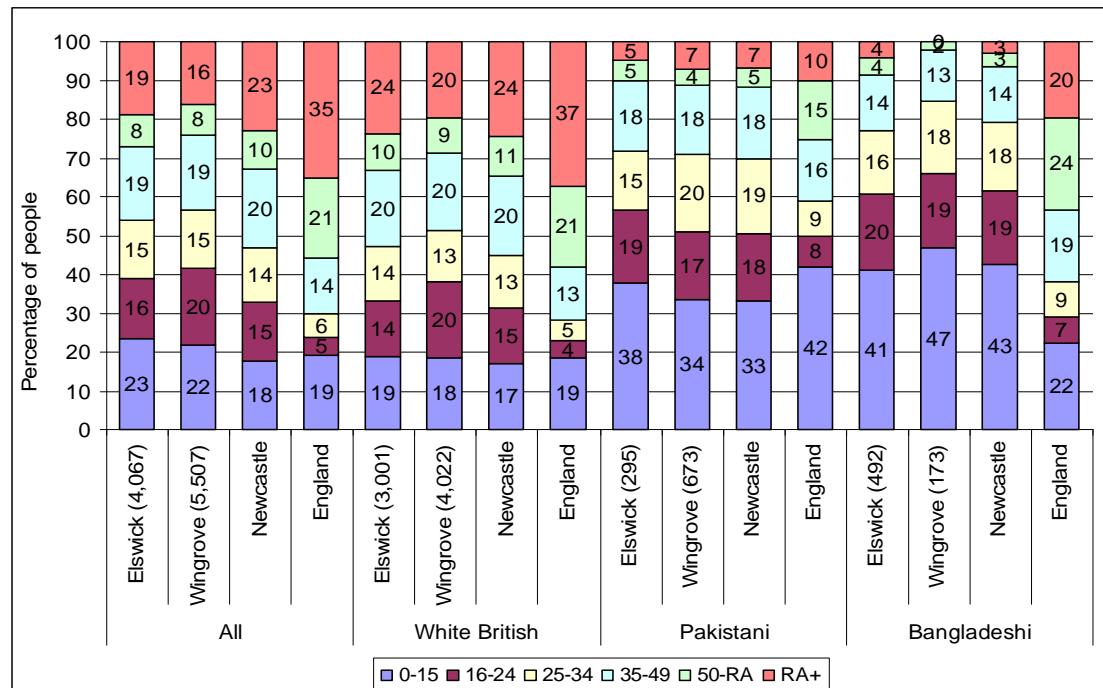
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A1 Female residents in the wards by country of birth: selected ethnic groups



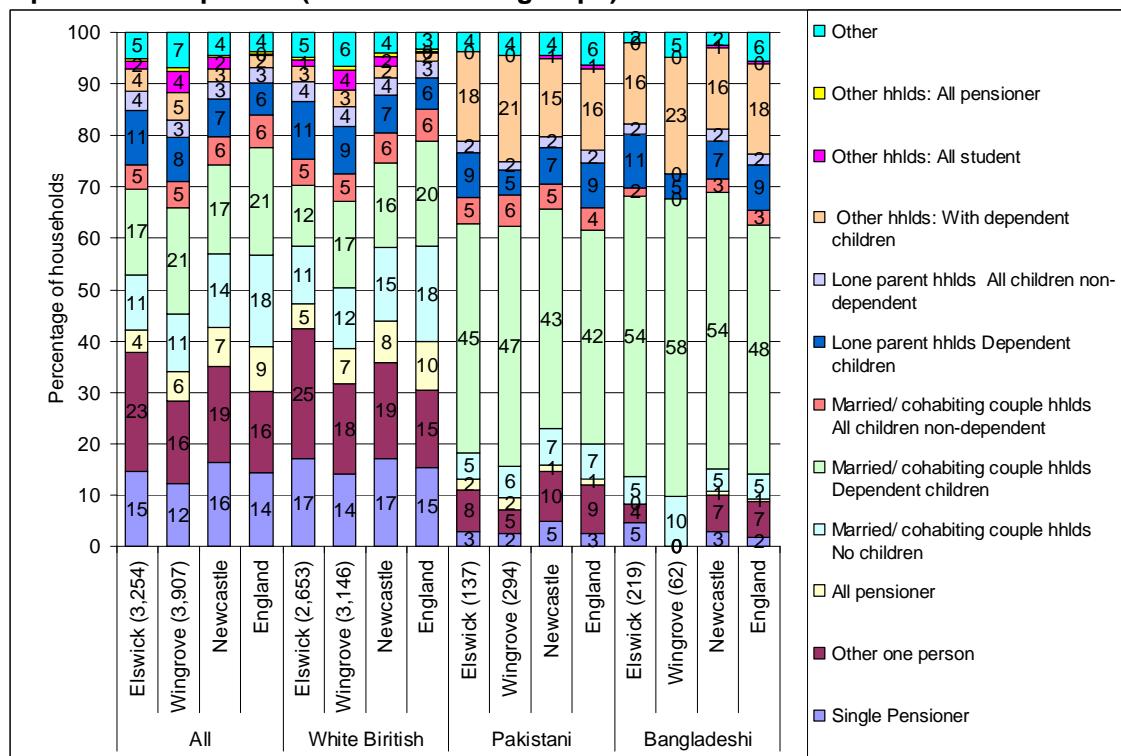
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure A2 Age of female residents in the wards, selected ethnic groups



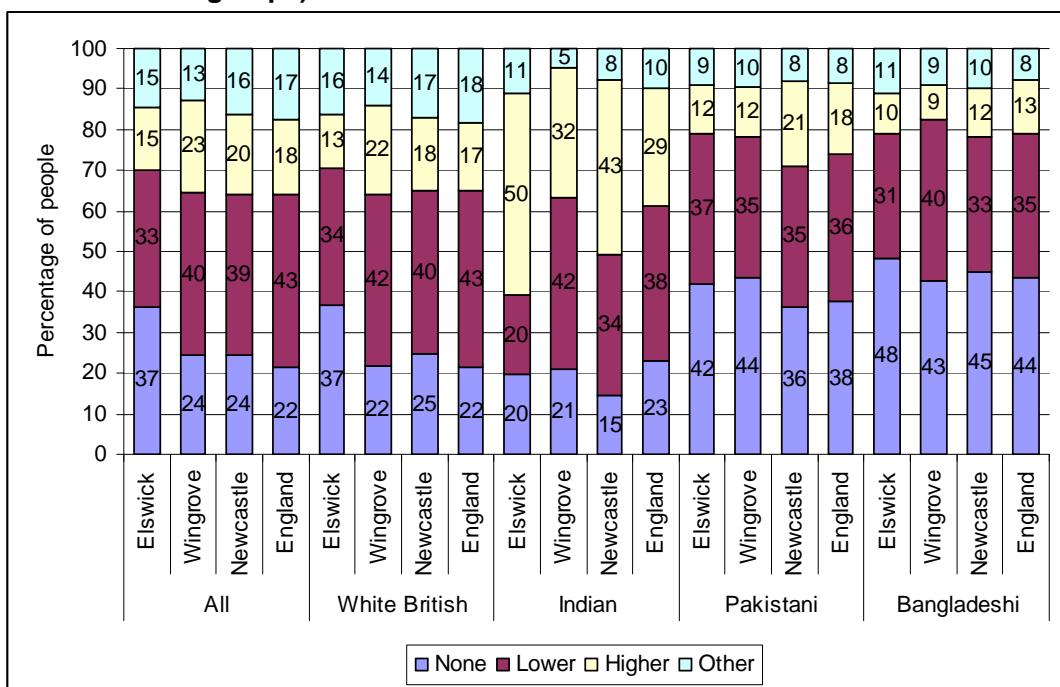
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure A3 Household composition of residents in the wards, by ethnic group of household representative person (selected ethnic groups)



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure A4 Qualifications of residents in the wards, by ethnicity (men and women aged 16-64/59, selected ethnic groups)



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Note: Lower – Below first degree, Higher – First degree or above