

# Striving for Success:

## Ethnic Minorities' Experiences of Entering the Professions



**This is a report of a research project to improve understanding of the experiences of people from ethnic minority communities entering and progressing through the professions. It was commissioned by the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS), formerly the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), and carried out by QED-UK, an ethnic minority focused community economic development agency and charity, based in Bradford.**



# Foreword

During my time as Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education we have put a lot of effort into widening access to the professions.

Following Sir Alan Langlands report “Gateways to the Professions” in 2005, we established a Development Fund to support projects which aim to improve access to graduate jobs in the professions for people from a wider range of backgrounds. Over a period of two years we have funded 24 projects to the tune of over four million pounds. I am very pleased to introduce to you the outcome of one of those projects in this report, *Striving for Success*.

The research was carried out by QED (Quest for Economic Development), an ethnic minority led charity based in Bradford. It highlights the experiences of ethnic minority people entering the professions and gives a ‘bottom up’ view of training for and working in a range of professions. Through focus group discussions in seven UK cities QED was able to build up a picture of a diverse sample of ethnic minority people and what they were able to contribute to the professions. The researchers found some very positive messages about the drive and dynamism of ethnic minority professionals in a range of disciplines. It also explored the barriers which had got in the way of their success.

There are some challenging messages in *Striving for Success*, but it is important that they are heard and understood by senior professionals, their professional bodies, and those responsible for teaching young aspiring professionals who need to consider how they can respond to the challenges.

The professions remain far too preponderantly a preserve of the white, able-bodied middle classes. If Britain is to achieve increasingly higher levels of skills in order to compete globally and we are to continue to work towards a fairer society in Britain then we must ensure that all citizens are able to access the professions and barriers are removed.

I therefore particularly welcome this report by QED-UK. It provides ‘grass root’ insights into the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minorities seeking to enter the professions and highlights areas where action should be taken.



**Bill Rammell**  
Minister of State, Lifelong Learning,  
Further and Higher Education



# Background to the Research

DFES commissioned a report on entry to the professions by Sir Alan Langlands. In 2005 DIUS published the report, *Gateways to the Professions (2005)*, setting out “Recommendations to Ministers on the action that can be taken to ensure clear accessible gateways for people who want to pursue professional careers.”

A number of professional bodies have come together in networks to take this agenda forward. The Race for the Professional network and the Professional Associations Research Network worked closely with QED on the project.

Our project was commissioned to follow up the Langlands Report. The intention was to reach a range of ethnic minority people who had experience of entering, or trying to enter the professions. We wanted to get a ‘bottom-up’ view of what this experience was like and what light it would shine on the barriers to entry and progression for ethnic minorities. We were looking for insights which might not be easy to access through other means. It would help to provide a more nuanced understanding of the reality of life in the professions for ethnic minority entrants. This would add value to the other work being carried out on the Gateways to the Professions agenda.

We used a qualitative research approach. A series of workshop or focus group sessions were held in seven cities across England and Wales. The first session was held in Bradford in December 2006 as a pilot, and a further six sessions were held in Sheffield, Newcastle, Cardiff, Manchester, Leicester and London over the period May to July 2007. The participants in the workshops were ethnic minority people who were invited to take part in the research through QED’s contacts in local community organisations. This network enabled us to benefit from the participation of a varied range of participants across ethnicities, ages, locations, professions and educational backgrounds. Guidelines for the sample and the setting for the workshops were set out by QED. The guidance note is set out in Appendix 2. The size of groups ranged from 14 to six. We held an all-women session in Newcastle partly to ensure adequate female participation, but also to ensure that issues specific to women could be explored in an all female environment. We held a session in Manchester which was hosted by Tung Sing, a Chinese led housing association. This enabled us to ensure inclusion of an ethnic group which has a reputation for academic success in British schools - and which may have different experiences to other ethnic groups. The ethnic background, gender and professions of the participants of all the sessions are set out in Appendix 1.

The research method was to bring together small groups of people from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, professions and ages, to facilitate a discussion which would provide evidence relevant to the research objectives. The sessions were held out of working hours and lasted for one and a half to two hours. QED provided two members of staff to facilitate each session. Sessions were recorded, with the permission of participants. Observers from the Race for the Professional network attended some sessions.

## **The Objectives of the Research**

The objectives of the research were:

- *To provide insights into the experience of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in progressing into and through careers in the professions.*
- *To isolate experiences and patterns in this field which appear to be specific to people from minority ethnic groups, and to understand how they are perceived by and affect those people.*
- *To understand how procedures and practices adopted by the professions create barriers to the progression of candidates for the professions.*
- *To seek ideas for ways that the professions can ensure that systems of recruitment and training are meritocratic.*
- *To provide feedback to professional bodies on the issues identified by the study.*

The nature of the research is to use group dynamics to help verify statements of members of the group through discussion and to concentrate on the topics which the group feel to be most important. (Robson 2002) From our seven groups we had a range of topics which were highlighted and the topics of most significance are discussed in the following sections. In reporting our findings we try to give the views expressed by participants. Our comments should be distinguishable in the text.

# Research Findings

## Parental Influence

Several groups explored the role of parents in determining career choices for children. There seemed to be an awareness of the stereotypical view of “pushy” Asian parents. Participants discussed their parents’ influence on their career decisions and described a varied range of experiences. It was felt that parents were undoubtedly the initial influence for most children. Both mothers’ and fathers’ influence were mentioned in the course of discussions. About half of the participants said that their parents had a professional or business background.

Middle class parents seemed to be well able to provide advice, but were narrow in their choices. Among Indian and Pakistani participants we found that medicine, law, accountancy and pharmacy predominated as parental career preferences to the exclusion of most other professions. African Caribbean parents seemed to be most open to a broad range of careers. Chinese parents appeared to be becoming more willing to accept a range of career choices. They seem to be particularly keen to see their children move away from the traditional Chinese catering business.

In Sheffield - which receives European Union Objective 1 funding, reflecting market failure - there were more concerns about the ability of working class families to support and advise their children. It was suggested that the high aspirations of parents are now seen by many young people as unrealistic.

Parental advice was mostly seen as positive. Among the Chinese participants, the feeling was that parents were strongly assertive about ensuring their children did well at school and reached university. The career choice was of less importance.

In the all-women group in Newcastle we encountered some of the most strongly committed professionals in any of the sessions. Daughters seemed to feel there was room for choice, but within limited parameters. Parents’ own formative influences came into play - a mother was an accountant and she advised her daughter that it was too hard a career, and to do law instead. One Pakistani woman described her father encouraging her to go to university because he believed that women should be independent.

Some participants had followed their parents’ advice and others had not. One woman had followed the advice of her father to do pharmacy because she did not know what subject to do. She felt that her parents were strongly supportive of her. A daughter who had been pushed to be a doctor had already made her decision to go into the professions, but went into law against her parents’ wishes. She regarded this as being rebellious. One participant’s father was an electrical engineer but he had wanted to be a pharmacist. He pushed his daughter to be a pharmacist, which she is, but now she hates her job. She always wanted to be a nursery teacher and still intends to move into that at some stage of her career.

Another woman rejected her father's advice to go into nursing, saying:

***"Dad wanted me to be a nurse but I did business and finance. I am now doing an MA." (African Caribbean Woman, Lecturer)***

There were a number of motives put forward for why parents want their children to go into the professions. It was suggested that some parents felt they had underachieved in this country and they were trying to ensure that their children came to be something. One woman suggested that she would be 'a better catch' if she had a degree. In some cases it was just a matter of people following in a family tradition. Although participants did not all accept their parents' advice they mostly respected their parents' views and felt that they were trying to do their best for their children.

In an interesting additional point, we were told by participants that some medical schools are now aware of the parental influence factor and at interview are trying to ensure that potential students are applying of their own accord rather than because of undue influence from home. While this may be well intentioned, it could be seen as creating a stereotype which might wrongly exclude ethnic minority students.

It was felt that some parents favoured careers such as pharmacy, accountancy and optometry because they would open up the option of setting up in business. Those with self employed parents felt that they were particularly well equipped to go down that route.

***"Nikesh and I come from a retail background and our parents are businessmen. Optometry and pharmacy teaches you to kind of mix a bit of both; use your fathers experience and then apply something a bit more professional." (Indian Pharmacist)***

A Pakistani female solicitor said that her father would like her to have her own practice so that she did not have to work for someone else.

Above all else parents were aspirational for their children and the children were very aware of these high expectations.

***"Asian families want you to do something big, like being a doctor or a lawyer." (Pakistani man)***

It was not just parents who had aspirations. The professionals whom we met were ambitious and determined to progress in their chosen field.

***"We felt that we had to achieve something and that we could not just sit back." (Indian lawyer)***

Looking now across the seven sessions, we were able to discern some clear patterns about parental influence. There was recognition among participants that it had not been easy for parents to make the right choices for their children. It was suggested that in some families there are few role models for good careers and that children are following parents' views because they have few other informal sources of advice. Children may be pushed in one direction by parents who themselves have a limited range of experience. Parents were perceived as being limited in what they knew about professions and careers generally. However, they were very aware of the temptations and potentially wrong influences on their children and were consequently keen to help them to take the right route in life. Families from the Indian sub-continent were perhaps rather more directive than other groups.

There was seen to be a process of change among second generation parents who had learned from their own parents' experiences. One participant suggested as an example that he would be more ready to let his daughter do an art degree than would have been the case in the past. This process would seem likely to be ongoing as parents of the third generation have greater experience and understanding of the education system and the current labour market.

## Education and Careers

Participants felt that parents were limited in what they knew about job opportunities. It would seem that they did not find it easy to get the advice they needed from school.

***“They (his parents) did not get the support from school to help them to help me.” (African Caribbean man)***

It was felt that second generation ethnic minorities still find schools to be difficult to engage with now that they are parents.

***“At the parents evening I see white parents in front of me getting information without asking, and I am struggling to get the information I wanted.” (Pakistani man)***

There was a concern about the lack of pastoral support in schools which does not make it easy for children with limited parental help. This is dealt with in more detail below.

***“Education should emphasise manners and behaviour.” (Pakistani man)***

***“If you give children the bigger picture of what is out there they can see the pathways.” (Pakistani man)***

It was reported that some Pakistani families are turning to the growing number of Islamic schools as an alternative because they are better able to communicate with staff there. It is, as one member suggested, an evolving process.

It was suggested that school attainment tables have had an adverse effect. There was a strong feeling in the Sheffield group that ethnic minority pupils are pushed into the vocational streams. This was described as being prevalent many years ago when Asian boys in the local college were pushed into motor mechanics - even if they wanted to go into medicine. It was suggested that today ethnic minority pupils are pushed towards vocational qualifications as a means of improving schools' league table scores.

Parental guidance in the Chinese community was described by members of the Manchester group as being first and foremost to get a good education. A member translated a Chinese saying to English for us, while apologising for its sexism:

***“There is a golden house inside the book, if you study hard you will find a good wife and a good house.” (Chinese housing officer)***

In the Chinese community children would be taught maths at home from a very early age, even before they learned English. This was explained as the foundation for a good education. For families with primarily a business ethic, maths gives security and helps family members to deal with money.

***“My parents forced me to learn my times tables before I was 6.” (Chinese student)***

***“Figures make it easy to make money and go into business. It is security. You need to make the figures come out right.” (Chinese female accountant)***

While parental advice will always be important, participants felt that good careers guidance should be provided in school at an early stage - at the age of 13-14 when young people are forming their ideas. This would enable children’s horizons to be broadened and give them a sense of perspective. However, in several of the groups, Connexions and the Careers Service were seen as being unhelpful and ineffective. There were strong feelings among some participants about the lack of support which they had received from them. There was a suggestion that today there is a ‘tick box mentality.’

***“The advisor would just tick the box to get the output,” (African Caribbean community worker)***

We found evidence in some of our discussions of a mismatch between, on the one hand, schools and the careers teachers trying to be realistic and, on the other, parents being aspirational for their children. We are told by a representative of the Institute of Careers Guidance that their policy is that careers advisors should encourage aspirations. One person referred to the experience of a Chinese friend who is a GP. When at school, a careers teacher had told him that he would not be good enough to do a medicine degree. Despite that unhelpful advice, he went on to succeed as a doctor. There was a sense that participants felt that they were being underestimated because of their heritage.

Few of the younger participants, who were at university or just about to start, had seen a Careers Officer and, when they had, they had not found them to be very supportive. They had nevertheless considered a relatively wide range of career choices.

Comments on Careers and Connexions were also negative from the perspective of the experiences of participants’ own children, who were felt to be much more independent in making their choices. It was felt that these organisations did not have the resources or skills to help children to aim for careers in the professions.

It was felt that guidance about degree course choices needs to be improved. Members of the Bradford group felt that they had suffered from not fully understanding their options when applying to university.

The school attainment levels of the Chinese community are high - over 80% of Chinese pupils achieved 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE and equivalent. (DCSF 2007) That should place them in a strong position to succeed in their chosen careers. Certainly the parents of the Chinese

people in the Manchester group had placed a strong emphasis on teaching in the child's early years. The emphasis on maths in children's early education is interesting as it appears to be a different emphasis to that taken by English educationalists. It seems to have led many of their children down the maths and science route at school, although that pattern would appear to be changing. There seems to be good reason for exploring what underpins this success and trying to foster that approach. There are however concerns about stereotyping, which are referred to below.

The Chinese students in the Manchester group discussed how they chose subjects to study. The youngest member who is still at school had joined the Red Cross and from that experience had decided to do a pharmacology degree. He received positive help from a careers teacher who suggested he study pharmacology and arranged for him to visit a hospital. Another young man had decided to do Aeronautical Engineering because, "it sounded cool." He intends to progress to the Chartered Engineer level by doing the one year postgraduate course. The third student in the group was doing a physics PhD, having not been accepted when in sixth form for an architecture degree. He saw lots of possibilities with his degree, research, teaching or the option, which excited him, consultancy. The fourth and final student, a woman, had gone to the LSE to study law which she had found tedious in parts, but was now enjoying as she was in her vocational training stage.

Good education was seen as crucial by all participants. The London group were particularly concerned about this issue. One member said that he and his wife were worried about their two year old son's future in the state system. He felt that the government ought to be looking at education being properly resourced. Good teachers would be snapped up by other schools. African Caribbean participants put a particularly strong emphasis on education and the groups in Sheffield and London came up with a strong consensus that education is the number one issue for the community. They talked about a 'lost generation' of children who are badly educated and won't have the skills they need.

***"Some schools are just terrible." (African Caribbean female pharmacist)***

The education system was facing challenges and losing the trust of children. A member of the Sheffield group said:

***"Kids think, "I have to go till I'm 16 and then I can do what I want." You must catch them early." (African Caribbean scientist)***

One of the characteristics of the participants was their willingness to look beyond their own needs and to take a wider view of what was necessary to help others to progress, either in the professions or their chosen field. This selflessness is a key strength of a good professional.

## Costs

We asked for opinions on the effect of university fees on the participants' ability to pursue their chosen career. No-one felt that it had been a significant issue for them personally. Some said it had led to them living at home while they studied. However, participants who were themselves parents did have views about the size of their children's student loan and the time which it will take to pay off. They did not want their children to be forced into taking any job just to earn enough to make payments on loans. There was concern about the potential impact of top-up fees in the future. Research was cited suggesting that cost would be a growing factor in higher education choices. Some participants were opposed to making students pay and one member was particularly indignant about any government policy which involved charges for university education.

A participant who was a father and a lawyer had concerns about the cost of education if his children decide to go into the professions. He had heard of students building up massive debts and sees that as a financial barrier to his being able to support his children's career choices.

The cost of further qualifications was very significant in some cases, more so than university degree fees. Completing a Law MA and Legal Practice Course had, he estimated, cost a member of the Bradford group about £22,000 in total. Exams for the Bar were also very expensive. Parents played an important role in helping to fund this stage of their children's education, despite the fact that the 'child' would be in their twenties. Very few of the professionals which we met progressed straight from their first degree into a professional role. RIBA has suggested that the level of debt taken on by architects after completion of their training will be as high as £36,000. (Langlands 2005 p15.)

This would indicate that it is at postgraduate level that finance becomes a highly significant barrier. Sir Alan Langlands said that he had focused on, "Those professions where a first degree followed by a period of further study or professional training is the normal entry route". However, much of the analysis in his report seems to concentrate on postgraduate study funded by research councils.

A Chinese PhD student saw the main barrier to be overcome as getting a long term research contract. If he did not achieve that he would unwillingly have to move away from his family home.

It was important to do paid work while training and one member who trained as a nurse described doing hospital shifts making beds while having to juggle study time with work.

Another participant had received no financial support to complete Bar School, and this had been very difficult. She was accepted onto a traineeship where she was funded and that had made a big difference. She had sent over 100 letters to barristers' chambers before she was accepted by one.

## Good Practice - Mentoring and Role Models

Mentoring was seen as a way forward to support young people's development. Some legal professionals had set up a system based on a model developed by women lawyers. This provides mentoring for junior members of the profession. It was suggested that there could be a national system of mentoring. It would work well if all professional bodies could take part in such schemes. They could make it a requirement for members to participate. Professionals were seen as having a responsibility to the next generation.

Some of our participants were already involved with mentoring. Legal Chances is a scheme through which law firms can go into schools and talk to children on an informal basis. It provides a place where professionals can say to young people - this is what we do as lawyers.

***"I got interviews but did not have a clue about interview technique. It took me a long time to find out what I had to do and to say. Young people should talk to lawyers and ask them what you should do." (Pakistani Lawyer)***

It was also suggested that it is the duty of the professions to inform youngsters about career opportunities. BT is running a programme in which professional staff work in conjunction with an ethnic minority networking group. They give presentations and run pilot schemes in schools. It was felt to be positive, although on a small scale.

A need was identified for a model to create a relationship between the private sector, the education system and the community. Corporate organisations would benefit by helping to bring on their next generation of staff. Community based programmes could help. PATH (Positive Action Training for Housing) was mentioned as a very good and long running initiative. However, community based schemes are often dependent on short term funding which means that initiatives have a limited life. One member was involved with a reading scheme. His firm had invited children from a local school into the office and they were

really inspired. The staff told the children that if you work hard you can succeed in working in an office or in a profession. A pharmacy invited children from their local schools to visit and see what they did. They also had a graduate scheme working during the summer.

Bradley et al (2007) refer to the GEM (Group Ethnic Minority Network) at Lloyds Bank which has successfully helped members of the network to understand and deal with barriers to their progression within the company.

The following proposals were made by the London group:

- ***More mentoring schemes working with schools and children at an early stage. Partnership between education and business community. Mentoring should be at different age levels.***
- ***More funding for outreach work promoting different professions.***
- ***Discipline in schools and a focus on learning. Bringing back the value of education. Basic core subjects have to be taught.***
- ***Scrap the budget on the army and put the money into education.***
- ***Teaching children to respect each other and each other's communities.***

It was felt that summer placements were good for children. The Year 10 placement was important but there was a need for more co-ordination. It tended to be easier for children whose parents were in employment to get a placement than for those whose families had no contact with a workplace. Schools had little time to organise them. It was suggested that local authorities should have a co-ordinator for all these placements, and there needed to be an aspirational approach encouraging children to aim high.

## Professional Bodies

With a representative of the professional bodies present, the Cardiff group talked about their experiences and impressions of their professional bodies. Comments were on the whole negative. As trainees or people at an early stage of their professional career they found little of relevance coming from their professional bodies.

### ***“Stuffy, middle class and London-centric.” (Indian GP)***

There was a concern that the professions were focused on the needs of partners and did little to make themselves accessible for trainees and younger members. The five day annual conference in London of one body was an example of inaccessibility for a member who could not afford to attend. There were some strong feelings about this, particularly since the bodies were responsible for regulating their members.

In the London group it was suggested that the professional bodies seem to be part of the same exclusive club. They need to see themselves as a part of the wider community. One lawyer participant argued that the Law Society had been going out of its way to promote diversity. However, he felt that the regulatory body is still made up of older middle class males and does not reflect society or its own membership. There was a strong feeling that attitudes of individuals in some professions will not change.

There were however some examples of good practice. One Asian woman had got involved with her professional institute in Wales and had found it welcoming. She had been to a lecture in London, and to local evening lectures. The institute also went into schools and she had been involved with one of the visits, albeit in a predominantly white area. She would like to become a member of the committee. It was pointed out that the ICAEW has an Indian President and it was felt that this was seen as positive for equal opportunities by members of that profession.

It was proposed that the professions could organise local discussion groups to enable dialogue between them and their ethnic minority and female members, particularly at the junior levels. Professionals had a responsibility to the next generation.

## Placements

Placements were discussed in a number of the groups and in a number of different contexts. There was discussion of the value of placements in helping to make career choices.

Placements were suggested as a means of providing taster courses. In Leicester we were told about a work placement scheme run by a local ethnic minority community organisation in conjunction with HSBC Bank, which seemed to be working well. The Sheffield group discussed the use of placements to give young people a start in employment. In what appears to be a worthwhile initiative Sheffield Council took 14 young people on placements, enabling them to get a start in employment. This is an externally funded programme (New Deal for Communities) and therefore time-limited, but it seems to have enjoyed some success.

A student who wanted to do physical sciences changed course as a result of doing a placement in that field. She decided this was not going to be the profession for her. She went to social sciences and she feels that this has proved to be the right decision and that the placement helped her to clarify her intentions.

We were told that the science faculty at one university offers work placements for students but it is very competitive to get a placement. Students have to apply for one of ten places for a class of 70. This is intended to safeguard the reputation of the university by only putting forward good students.

Placements are an important part of vocational training for a number of professions. A law student said that everyone she knew who had got a placement with a law firm was kept on. However, she knew of very few ethnic minority people who had actually gained access to a placement. This of course was her opinion. It could not be proved or disproved without equality monitoring systems being in place to give statistical evidence.

A teacher said that to go into the profession you have to first to be attached to a school in order to enter the Graduate Training Programme. However, it had not been easy to get a placement in a school. This was one of a number of 'chicken and egg' situations which we came across.

Although there seemed to be benefits from placements, we also found that there were problems. It was suggested that a lot depends on the placement co-ordinator and that where they are poor it can impact adversely on the placement for both student and provider. There may be a variation across courses. Some students are pushed into specialist placements - ethnic minority students being channelled into placements with ethnic minority

clients, denying them the chance to gain wider experience. Some people had problems with the culture of the organisation which they were placed in. There could also be practical problems with placements. In one case the daily travel was too long and too expensive for the student to continue.

The discussions on placements were interesting with a range of views. It was of concern that placements are limited and in the case of the law student that there may have been a differential availability to ethnic minority students. However, placements could be a means to help ethnic minority students break through myths and stereotypes among employers by showing what they are capable of. Presence in a workplace is bound to be valuable for the student in expanding their understanding of the profession. It can also lead to personal contact with a potential future employer.

## Discrimination

Discrimination is not a slogan. It is a concept which is defined by the European Union as, "When a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."

(<http://www.stop-discrimination.info/50.0.html#535>)

Connor et al (2004) looked in depth at the occurrence of racial discrimination in higher education. They found some evidence of this in the university admissions process which would warrant further investigation. On the whole they found a low level of instances of minority ethnic students reporting discrimination to the researchers.

In nearly every group that we conducted we heard accounts of experiences in the labour market and at university that would suggest that inappropriate practices relating to the candidates' gender and race are still in evidence. This partially supports the view of Connor et al (2004). Graduates gave examples of puzzling decisions and unconvincing explanations of why they had not got a job or training place for which they had applied. The term 'discrimination' came up frequently without any prompting.

A Pakistani man who had completed his accountancy training had applied for a job with a major accountancy and consultancy firm. They told him that having a degree in accounting did not help and that he would be better in a different sector. They wanted to train new staff themselves in their own methods and policies. They appointed someone with a 1st class History degree. He felt that this explanation was odd since it had not been made clear in the job advert. He moved into a field where he could use his training, but did not go on to chartered accountant level.

An African Caribbean teacher in London had found himself being offered a post as IT coordinator for his school only to have the offer first delayed and then withdrawn without explanation. This was one of a number of bad experiences which he described. He did not feel welcome and felt that his 'face did not fit', he felt that head teachers had a view that teachers had to be of a certain type. This man had given up a successful career in the IT industry to go into teaching. He had now decided to go back to his original field. The group was disappointed to hear that a black professional, who had made a positive choice to go into teaching in a science subject, where there is a real need for role models for black children, had decided to quit because of his experiences.

An African man recounted his experience of being turned down for a job managing a large complex.

***"I was interviewed for the post and was told that it had all gone well and that I had passed the written tests and interview and on the basis of my experience as a manager in Africa. They then interviewed some other candidates and they told me that they had analysed everything and they said "people are not going to respect you because it is a predominantly white area and so are the staff." They gave the post to someone else." (African business advisor)***

A number of examples were given about job interviews. These included candidates for professional roles being asked:

- ***About their parents' profession.***
- ***About their partner's job.***
- ***Whether they thought they could 'fit in' in a farming area.***
- ***What their views were about the Iraq war.***

A trainee barrister who had been interviewed a number of times was stunned by the wide variations in methods for choosing candidates for trainee positions. There had been mock interviews provided on the training course which had been useful. Some interviews had been very professional and formal with set questions and a panel which was trying to get the best out of the candidate. But others were very ad-hoc. One was at 9 o'clock on a Saturday morning and the sole interviewer had not had his breakfast, had had a late night on Friday and was making himself coffee. The interview was over in just a few minutes. Other examples of poor practice were given.

This suggests signs of an amateurish approach to recruitment and selection in some firms. Most organisations have taken steps to create systems which ensure that there is a structured and demonstrably fair process for assessing candidates for employment. Expectations of the people who we spoke to seemed to be that the professions would be professional and exemplary of good practice in employment matters. It is important for the professions that they are seen to live up to such expectations.

Law seemed to be a particularly problematic area. One group member who was a chartered accountant described his daughter's difficulties in finding a pupillage. She had done mini-pupilages but they led nowhere. He felt that law seemed to be 'a closed shop'. Pupilages were not given on merit, he said. He knew of people with lower qualifications than his daughter who had got into pupilages without difficulty.

A woman who had trained for articles said that she felt that women got into trainee and associate positions but did not progress as they would have expected. They had to progress their career outside. Opportunities were not presented to them by their firms. It was a gender issue and a cultural issue.

An Indian woman who studied law in London said that everyone seemed to be equal there. However, when she did her Legal Practice Course in Newcastle she found it to be very different. She had been trying for two years to get a training contract. She said that she could not understand why she had not been successful.

"I did the Legal Practice Course and not one coloured person had a training contract. It was evident - our class was fifty-fifty maybe it was just us being sensitive to it but it was something that was still there. Since then I have applied for training and I have not got anything yet. I have done umpteen interviews. It is my own failing - I never said it wasn't me. But what is holding me up?"

A lawyer, who had been qualified for 10 years, suggested that training contracts were governed by demand and supply in the economy. He had found that there was less demand for new lawyers when the economy was in recession and that there were more chances when the economy looked up. Discrimination was there but it was not explicit. He felt it was better for Asian candidates than it had been but it had not improved for African Caribbeans. He suggested that things were driven by clients, so that with more Asian clients in a commercial firm there would be more demand for Asian lawyers. He felt that the profession had taken steps to improve things on discrimination since a high profile case involving the Law Society, but progress was still slow for ethnic minorities and women. So far as progressing to partnership level, that was a real hurdle - it was an old boys' network.

An African Caribbean accountant talked about the difficulties involved in getting a training contract in his field. He said that he saw many African Caribbean and Asian trainees, but few went on to get jobs in big firms. It is a worldwide qualification which many Africans and Asians come here to study for. He believed there was evidence that when they returned to their own countries they tended to do better than African Caribbean and Asian people do here. He said that a lot depended on which university you went to. He suggested that there is a list of preferred universities but not one that you can see, suggesting that there is still 'an old boy network'. He felt that the profession is moving to selecting on the basis of university grades - traditionally you did not need to have an accountancy degree. Nevertheless, he believed there to still be opportunities for ethnic

minorities to do well if they try hard enough.

The 'old boys' network' was a recurring theme in several discussions. For example, it was suggested that engineering was far less open to appointing people from ethnic minorities than other professions. This was the experience of an engineer who had worked both as a software engineer in IT and a chemical engineer in the oil industry. He described what seemed to be a different culture in the two disciplines. The IT field was seen as being much more open to diversity. He had sent out his CV to many engineering employers when he completed his training, but received little feedback. So, frustrated at not getting a job, he changed the Christian name on his CV to an English name and found that he immediately received responses from employers.

It was suggested that 'who's face fits' was also an important factor in progressing in public sector professions in social work and teaching. Examples were given in one group of students who had applied to university with projected 'A grades' from their school but who did not get 'A grade' offers for their chosen course. It was not clear to them why they had received a lower than expected offer.

We came across several examples of people changing courses or changing professions at various stages. In some cases people dropped out altogether. A Pakistani man reported that when he started on his accountancy course at a southern university about 10% of the students were from minority ethnic backgrounds, but, as the course went on, this reduced to about 2-3% who passed their exams and completed the course. It is not possible to say whether this is a specific issue for ethnic minority students but it would seem worthy of further investigation. It is necessary to look at the retention rates as well as the recruitment rates for ethnic minorities going into the professions. If people are changing job or discipline, employers and education and training institutions should be able to tell from their data whether a pattern relating to ethnicity can be discerned.

It was felt that when graduates finish their course and are unable to gain employment this has resonance in the community. A number of examples were given of people in Sheffield with degrees who did not get graduate level jobs. This included taxi drivers with degrees, qualified doctors working in call centres, local unemployed people with accountancy degrees, graduates doing warehouse jobs, and highly skilled refugees with degrees who were stacking shelves in a supermarket. It was suggested that this deters ethnic minority young people from applying to university. In these circumstances it was suggested that it is not surprising that children feel 'what's the point?' when they see that a degree does not necessarily lead to a decent job. The overall effect of people not

achieving the degrees which they hoped for, or of not finding employment when they had a degree, was seen as reducing the popularity of higher education as a career choice.

***“Younger people say what has it done for them? ... They stand around on the street corner thinking how they can make money.” (African Caribbean man)***

Participants were clear that employers, professional bodies and university staff should judge people on their merits. Failing to do so was regarded as harming the image of the profession.

## **Positive Discrimination**

A fascinating discussion on positive discrimination at the Cardiff session arose from a remark by a man who felt that he had got a job in a hospital pharmacy because there were no 'brown faces' in that particular department. About half of the group believed that they may have benefited from positive discrimination. Some members were untroubled by that, while others felt that it could be undermining. It shows the awareness of people from ethnic minorities of the different ways in which the attitude of employers towards their ethnicity and gender can play out.

***“It is one of those things they have to show, being statistically correct, that we are not discriminating against you. There is discrimination in the department - don't get me wrong.” (Indian pharmacist)***

A woman who had been accepted onto a medicine degree at a time when government were pushing for more women to go into this field felt that she had benefited from positive discrimination. This led on to other examples.

***“My employer said he had to have the right balance in the firm so if next time he appoints a white person they cannot complain.” (Pakistani lawyer)***

Members were not sure if it was possible to tell if there had been positive discrimination. Some felt it to be offensive and undermining if it had happened, while others saw it as just a matter of the law beginning to make things work in favour of women and minorities as was intended by the legislation. That view seemed to be supported by most of the group, particularly since they had experienced adverse discrimination themselves and

were very conscious of the lack of ethnic minorities and women in their own professions. An overseas trained engineer in Leicester had abandoned his profession in order to work in education. He felt that he had benefited from positive discrimination, in that he had been headhunted for a senior post by a government body. He could not see how he could get a job at a similar level through open competition having applied for numerous engineering posts.

The option of self-employment was discussed in some groups and it is clearly an alternative which will be pursued where it is available and when people do not feel that they are valued by existing employers. Certain professions - e.g. pharmacy and accountancy - were seen as particularly attractive for this reason. Bradley et al (2007) suggest that some women favour the self-employment option because it gives them greater flexibility between home and work.

## Stereotyping

Tokenism and stereotyping on both race and gender were seen as recurrent issues, and were mentioned in a number of groups.

***“In some areas of business there are different stereotypes that you don’t belong here or you shouldn’t be here, as soon as you walk through the door. You can feel the surprise - even disgust - and that uncomfortable feeling translates into stress, especially if you don’t have the right support.” (African Caribbean Accountant)***

An Indian lawyer described the tokenistic approach of her firm. A senior partner told her that he wanted her because they needed to attract an Asian clientele.

A Chinese participant talked about stereotyping in her chosen field of law. She found it hard to put into words, but felt that people in the profession had odd expectations and were surprised to see her. There seemed to be a view that Chinese people were not interested in the Bar, and just wanted to be solicitors, where they could make money.

***“Colleagues had a very stereotyped view that we will keep our head down and make a profit. It is not discrimination, rather that I am an unknown and they don’t know how to deal with that.” (Chinese trainee barrister)***

Stereotyping meant that certain communities found it hard to break out of lower grade jobs. In Sheffield the Yemeni community had experienced this.

***“The perception of employers is that Yemenis are known here as labourers.”  
(Yemeni man)***

A participant said that in their tightly knit community he knew of 10 Yemeni doctors in the city who had applied for registration but none of whom were currently working in medicine.

Stereotyping had been in evidence to Chinese participants while they were at school.

***“I feel they expect more of you. In school I was one of only two who did not do maths A level. There is a stereotype and expectation that Chinese will tackle certain subjects.” (Chinese student)***

An African Caribbean teacher had a name which sounded as if it was Asian and on occasion, when he was supply teaching, he had been offered jobs by schools who were clearly expecting the person to be Asian and did not want someone who was African Caribbean.

An Asian social worker had had a very similar experience where she had been interviewed over the phone by a social services department.

***“When I first came to London I had an experience where I was interviewed for a job over the telephone and offered the job. I was brought up in Bristol and had a strong Bristol accent. I was offered the job and I turned up to take up the post on the Monday and asked for the guy who interviewed me. At the time I would wear western clothes. I stood there and waited for 20 minutes before he even acknowledged me. I had to approach him and his mouth dropped open. I knew exactly what he was thinking and I said, “I don’t want the job” and left. And that is where my decision to wear my traditional clothes comes from. The colour of my skin was a problem no matter what I was wearing.” (Indian female social worker)***

## Prejudice

One member said that at university she did not feel different from anyone else, but she felt that she had to do more work than English people in order to succeed. A Chinese female science student described working in groups on her university course and finding the white students working together and not including the Asian and African students. She reported this to her tutor who said that it was because those students were from a rural area. She said that she received no support and her feelings were hurt.

***"I was crying inside." (Chinese science student)***

A Pakistani man had been one of a group of four Asian students who felt they had not been given training in one key discipline on their university course. They got together to provide support for each other.

There was puzzlement at the invisible barriers which seemed to get in the way of people's progression. Various suggestions were made about what helped or held back people trying to progress in their chosen field. Class, race, gender, home address and accent were all mentioned as having a part to play in affecting candidates' chances when it came to interviews. An observer at one session suggested that it is about the university which you attend, she had been to a Russell Group University and was offered various jobs when she had completed her degree.

A trainee engineer was frustrated that she could not get the site based experience which she needs to get chartered status:

***"Every time, my senior gets a guy to go to the (building) site. Maybe they think it is not good for a woman to go." (Chinese woman engineer)***

Describing her experience of accountancy a woman referred to:

***"Men from the stone age." (African Caribbean woman)***

Prejudice from clients and customers were also reported. A GP who was the only Asian doctor in a rural area regularly received questions from patients such as "where are you from?" and when he, having been born locally, said "Cardiff" was then asked "No, where are you really from?" He found this wearying, but took it with good humour. In London, three social workers from different local authorities reported experiencing casual insulting remarks from clients. An Asian female social worker had found it particularly difficult dealing with this and had been upset that colleagues had undermined her with clients by telling them that she was not qualified in the UK.

***“It kind of brings you down before you start. It is very, very disheartening.”  
(Indian social worker)***

On the whole, members were unruffled by their own experiences, but were quite shocked when listening to each others’ stories. Their response to their own negative experiences was to try harder.

***“You have to be better than those around you. There is a glass ceiling not just for ‘ethnics’ but for women as well.” (Indian lawyer)***

## **Language**

We encountered a number of issues about the use of both spoken and written English.

In Sheffield, Yemeni people felt that they were being held back by their poor English. They thought it was impossible to get another job due to a mixture of racism and their lack of language. There were a number of doctors who had trained and practiced in Yemen who had failed the language test necessary to enable them to practice medicine in the UK. They felt that the test was harsh and was designed to exclude.

***“My accent won’t get me a job.” (Yemeni man)***

The Newcastle group discussed comments received from tutors about their English. A Chinese student had had marks deducted for her English. A Caribbean woman went on an English course while doing her MBA after her use of language was criticised. But the consensus was that:

***“Some of the English students’ language is worse than ours.” (Chinese student)***

Marking at university is supposed to be anonymised. But tutors had told students that their work can be recognised because of their non-standard use of English. One student was told that her use of prepositions meant that her ethnicity could be recognised by the marker.

***“We do not put our names on essays but teachers can tell you are ethnic minority.”  
(Chinese law student)***

It was suggested that Britain retains an unnecessarily strict interpretation of how English should be spoken and written, and that judging people for employment primarily on their language skills rather than their professional competencies and skills could be discriminatory.

***“In America you will find people speaking with all sorts of accents and it is not an issue. Why do I need to speak the Queen’s English?” (Bangladeshi engineer)***

One Chinese member had found his English had hampered him when he did his degree. However, since then he has done a second degree and found that his university had a department which provides English support, they come to lectures to tell students what help they can give. He found this very useful for himself and other Chinese students.

One participant said:

***“If your English is not good enough they discount you instead of looking deeper if you are capable of doing the job.”***

There is an issue here which needs to be thought through. Regional accents are increasingly seen as important signs of identity and ‘posh’ accents are ridiculed. Young people write in a script developed through the use of text messaging on mobile phones, and this has increasingly become normal in email use. Schools find that these usages spill over into essays and course work. There are major variations in modes of speech and writing.

There are plenty of frequently heard and highly regarded voices in the media which originate from outside of the UK. So the question must be asked: do some employers and educators appear to undervalue people with accents reflecting their overseas heritage? Is there a need for a more open approach to linguistic difference as well as the growing acceptance of modern English/American trends?

This may be a particularly difficult issue for the professions which regard the proper use of language as being important to their position and status. However, it should be reflected that most professions are increasingly international. Acceptance of greater diversity of expression should be part of the professions’ ongoing adaptation to changes in the society from which it will source its future membership.

## Being the Only One

Several of the participants described themselves as being the only person of their gender or ethnicity either on their university course or at work.

There was a woman who was the only ethnic minority person out of 300 in her office, and on her degree course she had been the only Asian woman out of 100 students. She had seen several examples of all white offices, having visited a number when applying for jobs. She works in the 'male dominated environment' of a major engineering firm. But she loves her job and was totally positive about working there, dealing with technical challenges every day.

Another woman was the only Pakistani female out of 30 students on her law degree course, the only Asian girl to get a contract before finishing her postgraduate course, and the only Asian female practising in the local courts.

A participant said that there were positives and negatives about being different. He described the "wow factor" of being the only Asian interviewed for a job.

***"Being an ethnic minority is different, it can work for you or against you."***  
***(Indian accountant)***

Others described the down side. A man who was the only Asian working in the office of a major accountancy firm was asked on his first day at work whether he had to have an arranged marriage. A woman who was the only person wearing a hijab in her workplace described receiving looks from work colleagues, which she found very unpleasant. She did not envisage working there long term.

An Asian lawyer said that when he visited firms he would look for how many ethnic minority people were visible in reception. He said that his firm was good and had encouraged ethnic minority people to apply.

***"When you are the only ethnic minority you can feel uncomfortable."***  
***(Pakistani lawyer)***

Another lawyer in Wales said that judges would look at her because they did not often come across female Asian lawyers in the courtroom.

There were concerns expressed in several groups about workplaces with a 'drink culture'. This was identified by one participant as a barrier which he had found difficult to overcome throughout his working life.

***"It is about drink. In Chinese culture you take the job quite seriously so you stay and finish the job. But if you don't go drinking you are losing some connections and that will get you into a dead end. You cannot express your thinking in another way." (Chinese man)***

Going to the pub was not something which a Muslim worker could join in with. When one Muslim participant was confronted at interview with the question of whether he drank alcohol he said "no" and this was clearly an issue for the employer. At a subsequent workplace he felt that, when he explained that he did not drink, it had become a hurdle. He said,

***"Assimilation - where is the compromise?" (Pakistani lawyer)***

By contrast a female lawyer said that her firm assumed that she could not attend events with clients where alcohol would be served. She said that she was happy to attend because she wanted to meet the clients and did not want to be excluded. There is a need for employers to take account of cultural and individual differences over drinking.

A Chinese woman was one of only two women on her engineering degree and she felt isolated.

One of the older women described the reaction of her local community to her parents when she went to university in the 1980s:

***It was like; "Oh you're going to send her away? Will she ever come back?" (Pakistani Community Worker)***

These are all examples of what may seem to some to be relatively petty issues but the isolation that goes with them may lead to a fragility of the person's position, which can in turn lead to that individual looking to move to another job. It can even lead to a decision to work in another country. Three participants in one group said that they saw this as a likely option for their progression beyond the glass ceiling in their chosen profession.

## Work Ethic

One of the strongest messages to come from the participants was a belief that whatever you do you have to work hard.

***“We come with an ethos which is; whatever job we do we strive.” (Indian accountant)***

This was instilled into many of them as children by parents who were conscious that the world is not always fair and that ethnic minority people have to do that bit better in order to be successful at work. This work ethic and determination will be an important ingredient of future success for ethnic minority professionals.

***“I was taught to aim high. That was what was instilled in me.” (Pakistani pharmacist)***

Most of the participants adopted a positive attitude to overcoming barriers or negative attitudes. Their response to their own negative experiences was to try harder. A member who took an accountancy degree said that he enjoyed the challenge. That attitude was apparent in many of the participants.

***“You can sit down and moan or you can change your destiny.” (Pakistani Lecturer)***

A science student said that at university she did not feel different from anyone else, but she felt that she had to do more work than English people.

A Chinese professional said that he felt that it had been a struggle to get where he is now (managing a large not-for profit organisation) and that Chinese people had to fight their corner to demonstrate that they are capable.

Ambitions were expressed clearly and confidently by a number of participants. One woman wanted to become a member of the Welsh Parliament and another was thinking of returning to her native Singapore to become a politician there. A female lawyer intended to be an associate in her practice within 9 years (allowing time to have children).

One member reported that he was told by a teacher some years ago that he had no chance of getting a degree so he left school at 16. He said that he had given himself a kick and succeeded in getting into university, going on to complete a degree in accountancy.

For women there was also an awareness of the issues which they would face in balancing their career with having children, but this did not seem to deter them from aiming high.

## Striving for Success

Much of our findings have reflected negative experiences at school, university and in the professions. However, our discussions rarely had a negative tenor. Participants were mostly keen to emphasise their positive approach to the hurdles and the prejudices which they had experienced. They recounted incidents with a rounded mixture of humour and indignation.

Striving for success will enable many ethnic minority people to overcome the barriers of prejudice and discrimination and to become valuable professionals in a wide range of disciplines.

The barriers are subtle. The undermining comment that a person had been appointed because the firm needed to show they had recruited an Asian person is not designed to make the individual feel confident of their position. The civil servant who received looks from her colleagues because she has started to wear the hijab is now unsure that she wants to continue working there, despite her commitment to her job. In Sheffield it was felt that inner city residents can suffer from postcode discrimination and in those areas of long term disadvantage it is appallingly difficult for people to see the relevance of any form of work, let alone a profession.

What shone through the discussions was the determination of these men and women to achieve and to overcome the obstacles put in their way. The majority of the discussions focussed on solutions. There was no complaining, although individuals were clear that the playing field was anything but level for them whether as ethnic minorities or as women. Their ambition to succeed was undiminished and they were impressive in their optimistic approach to climbing the career ladder.

There clearly is still too much prejudice and in some cases outright discrimination affecting ethnic minorities both male and female at various stages of their professional careers. The means of combating those issues are well established in law and the new Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has a range of powers to deal with them. However, the subtlety of the problematic behaviours is such that it needs well tuned tools to deal with them.

Overall there is a need to do more work with employers to ensure that appointment and progression are based on merit. There was evidence from the discussion of less favourable treatment based on ethnicity, and some actions which would appear to be potentially unlawful. There is a need to promote better employment practices in firms who may regard themselves as professional first and employer of staff second. We would

contend that poor practice on employment and equalities will impact on the professionalism of an organisation. The professional bodies would seem well placed to take on a role in promoting good practice. However, their capacity is in many cases limited by their lack of staff trained in dealing with employment and diversity issues and, in smaller associations, having to rely on the voluntary efforts of their members. There are diversity specialists in some of the larger associations and we feel that capacity building of the professional bodies with limited infrastructure would help to improve all round competence in promoting and being responsive on the diversity agenda.

At present there does not appear to be sufficient data about the labour market performance of ethnic minorities in the professions. Without good information, professions are open to criticism about the proportionality of ethnic minority employment. Ethnic monitoring can help the professions to see where there are issues to be addressed. EHRC can provide expert advice on setting up these systems. Backing from government would be helpful as some of the data issues arise in the education system, for example collection of data on drop-out rates from university by ethnicity.

# Recommended Action

1. The first tool which we would recommend is collection and analysis of ethnic data at appropriate stages of professional careers to establish patterns which may or may not signal unfair treatment of ethnic minorities. This should be carried out by the professions themselves. Given their dispersed structure this may be difficult, but professional bodies can and should work with government, universities and employers to devise appropriate methodologies.
2. The second tool is training and development advice on equality procedures and policies which should be made available to professional staff through professional bodies. If necessary this should be mandated by government.
3. The third tool is the creation of a network of initiatives to reach out to young people from ethnic minority communities and to convince them that there is a place for them in the professions and that it is worth them aspiring to a career in that world.
4. Finally, we would commend the proposal made in one of our group sessions that the professions should make it the duty of a professional to take part in activity to engage with young people and encourage them in developing their career ideas. There should be more mentoring schemes at different age levels working with schools and children at an early stage, involving partnerships between education and business. This could be done through company Corporate Social Responsibility and volunteering programmes.

## Recommendations from the Langlands Report

We would also like to commend a number of the recommendations of Sir Alan Langlands which have resonance with our findings and which we believe would be particularly helpful as part of an ongoing strategy.

Set out below are the recommendations from the Langlands Report which we see as being particularly relevant, given the evidence which we have gathered in our research. These recommendations should be given priority for implementation by the government and employers in the professions.

***Some people consulted felt that some of the practices adopted by employers have a detrimental impact on recruitment to the professions. (p94)***

We found evidence to support this concern. The experience of the woman who was interviewed on a Saturday by a lone interviewer would suggest that this employment practice was not only poor in itself, but also detrimental to the image of the profession. A number of inappropriate interview questions were reported at different sessions suggesting that there is a problem with recruitment practices. However, participants also reported examples of good practice so the problem is one of unevenness. Where there were bad examples they smacked of amateurism, which reflects badly on a professional organisation.

***It may also be the case that students from families with social or professional contacts with those working in the professions are more able to secure work experience, work placements and even employment than those students from families who do not have these contacts. (p94)***

There was evidence of concerns from all of our sessions that some people are disadvantaged by their background when applying for positions in the professions. The remarks about whether one's face fits were manifestations of an undercurrent of wariness among ethnic minority people applying for jobs and training. We found some evidence that Asian people were using their family contacts to help their children into professional roles. Any suggestion that this may be seen as showing that the issue applies across the board and is therefore acceptable should be treated with caution. Firstly the numbers of people with access to influence will be much lower for the minority than for the majority community. Secondly, and in the long run, this approach to job seeking through ethnic groups will lead to segregated workforces, an undesirable situation leading to ongoing social divisions.

***Employers should review their recruitment and retention strategies to ensure that they provide equal access to professional job opportunities and avoid discriminatory employment practices (p95)***

Strategies should encompass recruitment, retention, training, promotion, remuneration, and discipline and grievance policies. Employers should have equality action plans and should periodically carry out Equality Impact Assessments of their policies.

***The DfES should work with employers, professional bodies and universities and other higher education institutions to monitor trends in the profile of recruitment into the professions and consider if further research is required. (p96)***

While exploring the background to our research we asked DIUS for national data on a number of issues raised in our discussions, for example drop-out rates by ethnicity; courses and universities with very small cohorts by ethnicity, etc. None of the data which we were looking for seems to be collected. A serious approach to equality in the professions would be underpinned by good management information. It would give indications of problem areas and of progress in addressing issues. Monitoring systems are axiomatic to good equalities practice. Proper use of the monitoring data is vital to ensuring that paper equal opportunity policies are successfully implemented in practice. It enables managers to see what their organisation has achieved in recruiting, training and promoting people from potentially disadvantaged groups. Without those systems, policies represent no more than statements of principle and are unlikely to lead to any meaningful action.

# Appendix 1

## Participants Data

| <b>Gender</b> |    |
|---------------|----|
| Male          | 34 |
| Female        | 32 |

| <b>Ethnic / national origin</b> |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| African Caribbean               | 8         |
| Bangladeshi                     | 2         |
| Chinese                         | 11        |
| Ghanaian                        | 1         |
| Indian                          | 11        |
| Iranian                         | 2         |
| Nigerian                        | 1         |
| Pakistani                       | 26        |
| Singaporean                     | 1         |
| Yemeni                          | 2         |
| Zimbabwean                      | 1         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>66</b> |

| <b>Occupations represented</b> |
|--------------------------------|
| Accountancy                    |
| Business Management            |
| Civil Service                  |
| Community Work                 |
| Counselling                    |
| Dentistry                      |
| Engineering                    |
| Housing Management             |
| Human Resources                |
| ICT                            |
| Law                            |
| Medicine                       |
| Nursing                        |
| Pharmacy                       |
| Purchasing and Supply          |
| Science                        |
| Social Work                    |
| Student                        |
| Teaching (HE/FE)               |
| Teaching (school)              |

# Appendix 2

## Focus on the Professions Diversity Research Guidance for Organisers

### The Project

This guidance note is intended to help in setting up group sessions for the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) research project which is being carried out by QED-UK, a Bradford based ethnic minority led charity.

### Background to the Research

DFES commissioned a report on entry to the professions in by Sir Alan Langlands. In 2005 he produced a report, Gateways to the Professions, setting recommendations to Ministers on the action that can be taken to ensure clear accessible gateways for people who want to pursue professional careers. A number of professional bodies have come together in networks to take this agenda forward. The Race for the Professional Network has been established by the Commission for Racial Equality and will be working closely with QED-UK on the project. DFES have commissioned QED-UK to carry out a qualitative research project on the issues relating to access to the professions for minority ethnic groups.

### The Objectives of the Research are:

- *To provide insights into the experience of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in progressing into and through careers in the professions.*
- *To isolate experiences and patterns in this field which appear to be specific to people from minority ethnic groups, and to understand how they are perceived by and affect those people.*
- *To understand how procedures and practices adopted by the professions create barriers to the progression of candidates for the professions.*
- *To seek ideas for ways that the professions can ensure that systems of recruitment and training are meritocratic.*

- *To provide feedback to professional bodies on the issues identified by the study*

The research method is to bring together small groups of people from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and to facilitate a discussion which will provide evidence relevant to the research objectives. The session will be held out of working hours and will last for 1.5 to 2 hours. QED will provide two members of staff to facilitate the session. Sessions will be recorded, with the permission of participants. An observer from the Race for the Professional network will attend each session.

A report will be provided of each session, and will be made available to the DFES, and the professional networks. Circulation of the report will be confined to DFES and the partner professional body networks. A final report will be produced when the series has been completed.

### Setting up the Group

In order to ensure that the research is rooted in local communities QED-UK will be working with local minority ethnic group centres to set up the session in their area. This guidance note is intended to help ensure that the discussion will yield a wide range of experiences and opinions. The discussion will be led by staff from QED-UK.

To make the research valid and to ensure that participants find it a positive experience, it is important that each group is set up according to the following guidelines.

Each group should have a membership of between 8 and 12 people. In order to ensure that the right number attend, invitations will need to be given to more people, since it is likely that some invitees will be unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances. It is therefore advisable that up to 20 people be invited, and they should respond by accepting the invitation. Their attendance should be confirmed nearer the time of the meeting.

All participants should be at some stage in a career in a recognised profession.

**This includes:**

- *studying in higher education for a qualification leading to a job in a professional role*
- *studying for a professional qualification outside of a higher education institution*
- *in the process of applying for employment in a professional role*
- *in employment in a professional role*
- *having been recently employed in a professional role and having left the job*

They should all be of minority ethnic heritage.

The composition of each group should be as diverse as possible.

**There should be variety in:**

- *the range of ethnicities present*
- *male and female membership*
- *the age range*
- *the variety of educational backgrounds.*

It may not be possible to achieve this but best efforts should be made in issuing invites to achieve this diversity.

There may be occasions where, for whatever reason, e.g. weather, attendance is poor. If acceptances come in below 10 or the actual attendance falls below 7 we would expect to arrange another session in that area and/or give it additional marketing, possibly at a different location, to ensure an attendance of at least 8. We may still hold a discussion with an inquorate group if only to respect people having turned out.

## **Arrangements for the Meeting**

Invitations to the meeting should be sent out 4 weeks prior to the meeting and should include the background to the research on page 1 of this

guidance note; the time of the meeting; and the venue with directions or a map. A copy of the invitation letter should be sent to QED, with a list of invitees when it is sent out.

We want the experience to be as positive as possible for the participants and so would expect the venue to be comfortable and suitable for the discussion. There will be approximately 15 people present. The meeting room should be set up with seats around a table to accommodate that number. Too large a room does not feel comfortable and makes the acoustics poor. A carpeted room gives good acoustics. There should be jugs or bottles of water and glasses on the table. The meeting will be audio recorded, for the purpose of producing the report of the discussion and easy access to a power point is necessary. The venue should be available to QED-UK staff 1 hour before the scheduled start time. QED will provide funds to include room hire and a simple buffet. The food should be served before the commencement of the meeting. The meeting is only open to the invited participants. It is not possible for anyone else to attend the proceedings.

We would be interested in conducting some sessions in a setting where members of the professional networks can observe, with permission of participants, through a two way mirror. Some local authorities have these facilities and if such a facility was available we would be interested in using it. (This did not prove possible, or necessary)

## Appendix 2 Texts Referred To

|   |      |  |  |
|---|------|--|--|
| Harriet Bradley, Geraldine Healy, Cynthia Forson and Priyasha Kaul  | 2007 | Workplace cultures: what does and does not work  | <i>Equal Opportunities Commission</i>                                  |
| Helen Connor, Claire Tyers, Tariq Modood, Jim Hillage   | 2004 | Why the Difference? A Closer Look at Higher Education Minority Ethnic Students and Graduates | <i>Institute for Employment Studies</i>                                |
| Sir Alan Langlands  | 2005 | Gateways to the Professions  | <i>Department for Education and Skills</i>                             |
| Michael Shiner and Tariq Modood   | 2002 | Help Or Hindrance? Higher Education And The Route To Ethnic Equality                         | <i>British Journal Of Sociology Of Education, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2002</i> |
| Colin Robson  | 2002 | Real World Research  | <i>Blackwell</i>   |
| Nii Djan Tackey, Jo Casebourne, Jane Aston, Helen Ritchie, Alice Sinclair, Claire Tyers, Jennifer Hurstfield, Rebecca Willison and Rosie Page | 2006 | Barriers to employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain                            | <i>Department for Work and Pensions</i>                                |

## Acknowledgements

QED would like to express its appreciation to those who have been part of this research process. In particular we would like to acknowledge the support of DIUS, who were prepared to contract and fund an ethnic minority organisation to take part in their programme and who provided excellent support throughout. Many thanks go to Race for the Professional and PARN, our partners in the programme. We would particularly like to thank Robin Lynn of the Equality and Human Rights Commission for his commitment to the project and enormous practical help throughout. Numerous local organisations helped to set up the group sessions and we are grateful for their efforts.

Most of all we would like to express our appreciation to the ethnic minority professionals who took part in the group sessions, often sharing sensitive personal experiences with the group. Their commitment to their vocations shone through in the discussions. We sincerely hope that we have been able to use that light to make clear to our readers the issues which must be addressed to enable there to be a level playing field for all those, of whatever gender or ethnicity, who wish to take on the long road to

