Community Consultation Report 22/23

BAMER Women's Basic Skills, Training & Employment Readiness Programme

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Introduction

Diversity Matters North West, is an award winning, independent local charity based in Hyde, working across Tameside with diverse ethnic minority communities. We work to combat health inequalities, social exclusion and to promote community cohesion. We aim to improve the health and wellbeing, skills & employment readiness and community spirit of people in Tameside.

Tameside is amongst the 20% most deprived area in England where 18.9% of children live in low-income families[1]. Tameside is amongst the 50% of England's poorest neighbourhoods where the North represents 30% of this[2]. In 2020, Tameside had approximately 231,000 residents, where nearly 50% are females, and over 71,000 are over the age of 16[3]. In March 2019, 3.9% of the working age population claimed benefits[4]. The borough has also the highest rates of unemployment at 5.8%, highest inactivity rates at 24.9% and lowest employment rates at 70.5% in comparison to England's national average[5].

There remains a high amount of migration into the Tameside, particularly Hyde from rural Sylhet in arranged marriages. We have seen many women we have worked with arrive in Hyde, with very little or no education therefore, low English language skills. With no immediate family or friends, these women often find themselves isolated and removed from society, therefore, aspiring to get on to the labour market is not attainable and not something these women can envisage for themselves. It has been evidenced that "skill and qualifications have a considerable influence on the risk of poverty, affecting both employment and pay. Those with higher qualifications are more likely to be employed and to earn more than those without"[6]. Employment is a primary determinant of health where it has been linked to causes of health inequality time and time again, less income means less wealth, less power and poorer health[7].

COVID19 and Transition to a Hybrid Delivery Model

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been difficult for many people, coming out from the pandemic, people were fearful to start to engage in the project after two years of being socially inactive and isolated. People informed us of the many challenges they faced and are facing such as, financial uncertainty, lack of social contacts, increased social isolation and the negative impact on learning and employment this has had for them and their families. During the government lockdown, DMNW placed all face-to-face activities on hold and negotiated different activities with dealt with the imminent local needs for minority ethnic women in Tameside.

Our project focused on working with minority ethnic women who we know experience a multitude of barriers and where statutory services often find hard to reach. From

[1] E08000008 (phe.org.uk)
[2] IS WORK GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING? Gordon Waddell, A Kim Burton 2006
[3] NOMIS
[4] Key Statistics about Tameside
[5] https://app.box.com/s/vfl9xi3b1f207w9q0b8c74tgij6mk910/file/296662094663
[6] https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/working-age-poverty-among-people-different-qualification-levels
[7] https://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/fundamental-causes/employment-inequality

previous consultations we knew that women struggled during the pandemic and then as the lockdown eased, were very apprehensive about coming out and engaging in face-to-face activities, at the same time, we also saw many women wanting more social interaction as they told us they felt isolated, lonely and felt that their mental health declined. With this in mind, and the impact of COVID on minority communities, we developed a hybrid strategy of delivery, where we adopted different ways to engage using our knowledge and expertise of the community. This consisted of a combination of face to face, socially distanced sessions, telephone, and online opportunities. We trained women to join online, offering Zoom, Teams and WhatsApp support. Many of these women did not have English as there first language nor had any experience in using IT. We had many challenges to overcome with them and successfully got them active online through our one-to-one support, we worked with our volunteers to develop a guide to help support our service users get online.

After the support we held our first focus group online and it was a huge success. We offered our one-to-one employment support, employment workshop, ESOL and community interpreting training online and worked with partners to arrange IT devices for women so that they can join online. Online session started from Jan 2021 and have been successfully upskilling the women. Taking a hybrid approach to our delivery model, in line with government guidelines on social distancing, we started to see a gradual increase in engagement in our session delivered in the community. We offered support on to learn how to join online, continued supporting them to increase their confidence, skills, knowledge, connecting them to the right services and getting them ready to apply for future employment.

Community Consultation

Our programme is co-produced with those who we work with, therefore, it is imperative that we conduct regular consultations to assess the local needs, gaps in support and identify ways in which we can reshape our services and work in collaboration with partners to meet the needs of women from minority ethnic backgrounds in Tameside better, especially after a period of economic turmoil. This is our third annual community consultation with minority ethnic women of Tameside. Survey questions were created from feedback from the previous consultation, casual workers and volunteers including staff and senior managers of the project in addition to using the intelligence gathered from our current existing programme where we identified many challenges for women entering the labour market. (Refer to Appendix 1).

The aim of this is to

a) gain knowledge and understanding of what the current training, learning and support needs are to employment readiness.
b) identifying the barriers and challenges faced by many women and
c) to reflect on our current offer to shape future programmes of support.

This year we also added questions regarding employment status and type of employment they are seeking.

This report highlights and summarises the key findings of this community consultation along with recommendations for next steps.

Methodology

We conducted primary research via a survey to capture the data and conduct analysis of the findings. The survey contained open and close questions and multiple-choice options. To ensure we were inclusive, and women had equal access to the survey, we adopted different methods to deliver the survey and engage with women from minority ethnic communities in Tameside despite the lack of reading, writing and digital skills.

We took the survey (both online version and hardcopies) to women and offered language and face to face support provided by trilingual staff and volunteers. We conducted the survey via;

Method 1 – Telephone & Face to Face Interviews

This was highly effective when engaging with existing service users. We had bilingual staff and volunteers at hand to enable effective communication and ensure the questions were relayed as intended and that they were fully understood by the recipient. Telephone was quicker and convenient for women that could not come out and meet face to face due to other household and extended family responsibilities than the face-to-face interviews although some women did prefer this. 40% of our completed survey was completed via these methods.

Method 2 – Organised Focus Groups

This was also highly effective when engaging with new groups of people, or those that preferred the face-to-face approach and wanted a pre-arranged date and time so they are able to organise their time and responsibilities in advance of attending. We were able to generate some quality discussions as a group in relation to some of the questions, which unpicked the reasons behind them. We conducted 3 altogether.

Method 3 - Accessing local groups.

We mapped out and identified external organisations where women would engage and left hard copies of the survey with group leaders to complete with their service users. This proved least effective as it was not a huge priority for them, we got quite a lot of incomplete surveys.

Method 4 – Indoor and Outdoor outreach stalls.

This was in areas where minority communities are already accessing/visiting, targeting specifically those that are not engaged with DMNW. This included local primary schools, cash and carries, outdoor market and other local community groups. We also engaged with women entering our centre and supported them to complete it with language support on the day. This was 50/50 in terms of engaging with women. Some women were in a rush, some did not want to disclose information in a public environment.

Method 5 – Email and social media.

We shared the link to the survey on WhatsApp groups via volunteers and parents including primary school parent groups, faith groups offering support to complete. Link was also shared with staff and volunteers. This proved to be the least effective

engagement method for this client group. We had 0 surveys completed via this route. Despite this, we followed up with phone calls which worked better.

Through our previous experience, to have multiple methods of engagement and reach allows us to be present in the community and engage with our client group in ways that suit them. We found that the face to face for non DMNW users (focus groups in different venues) and over the telephone for existing service users' method worked best and was the most effective in completing the forms. Emailing link or leaving hardcopies in venues where there were no lead person driving this forward was ineffective.

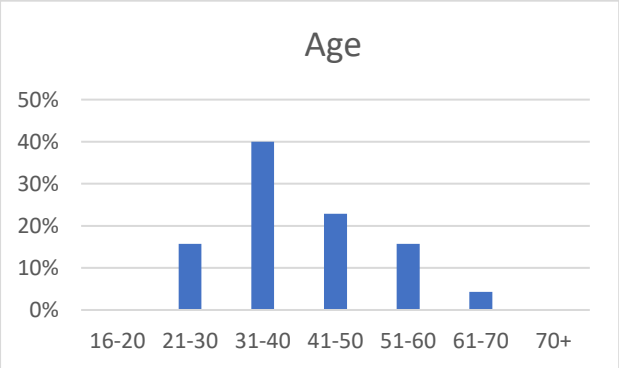
Findings

The survey was completed over a period of 2 months from January 2023 until February 2023 and successfully engaged with a sample of 70 women from a diverse range of backgrounds, age groups and wards of Tameside. Majority of this was conducted over the phone by tri-lingual staff, during outreach stalls in Hyde and Ashton outdoor market, and face to face focus groups.

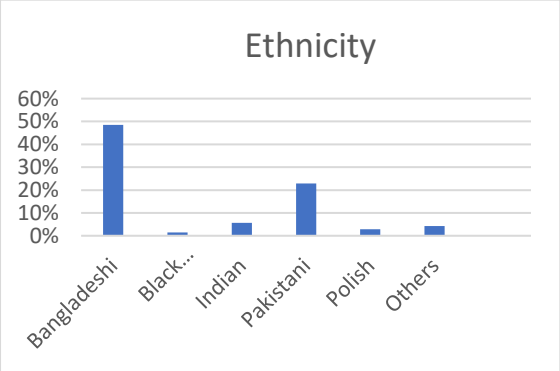
- 90% of the women we engaged required language support to complete the survey.
- 60% was face to face and
- 40% over the phone.

Face to face engagements still remained the best method of engagement for this client group. We found that when we were interpreting in Bangla and Urdu, each questionnaire took approximately 25-30 minutes. Just the English survey took approximately 10. The findings below have been obtained from the completed surveys.

Graph 1: Age



Graph 2: Ethnicity

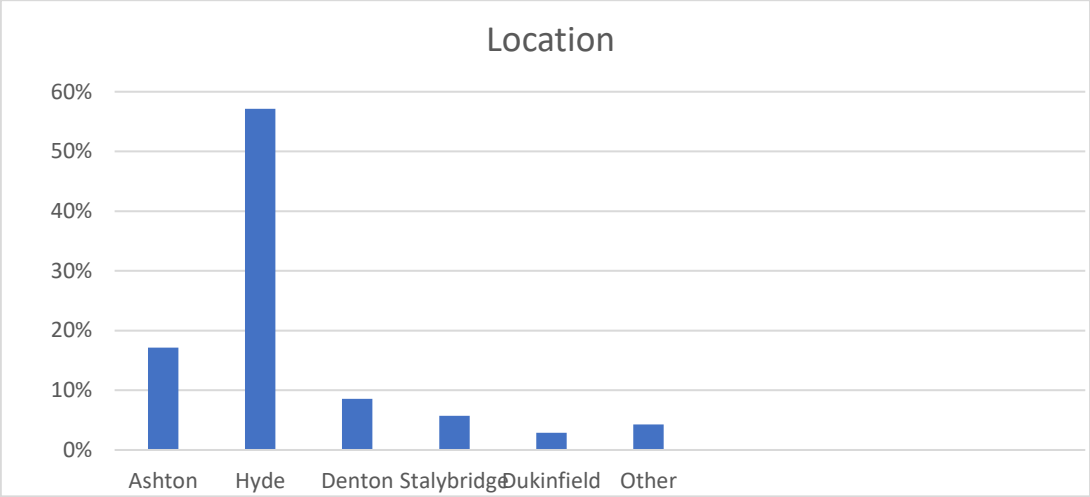


The largest age range was 31-40years at 40%. The second largest age group engaged was 41-50 (23%). The smallest groups we engaged were 51-60 (16%), then 21-30 (16%) and then 61-70 (4%) (See Graph 1). These figures are consistent with the demographic of women that we engage within the project and year on year with our annual community consultation. Despite dissemination of the survey via online methods, we did not manage to reach younger age group. However, at the same this,

this could be since other services have opened and therefore, younger groups are able to access alternative provisions in comparison to our last consultation in 21/22.

49% of the women that completed the consultation were from a Bangladeshi heritage 23% Pakistani, Indian 6%, Polish 3%, Black African 1% and others 4%. This correlates with our engagement % across the borough, where majority of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community reside in Ashton and Hyde (See Graph 2).

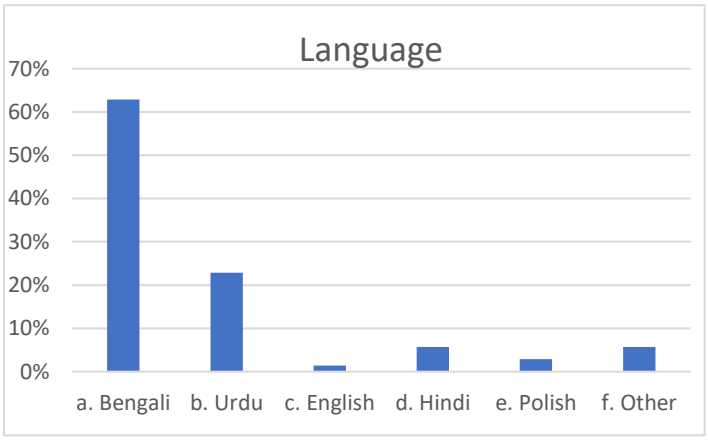
Graph 3: Location



Our survey told us that 57% of people who completed the survey resided in Hyde. 17% of people were from Ashton, 9% from Denton, 6% Stalybridge and 3% Dukinfield and others which 4% include from Newton and Audenshaw.

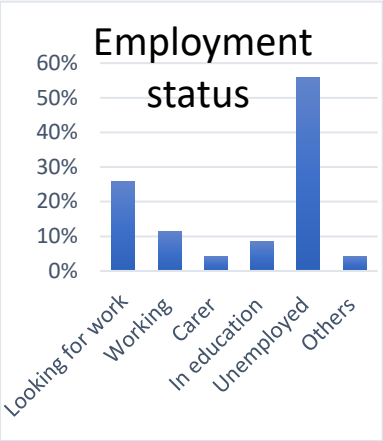
This reflects the ethnic minority demographics within the borough where majority of the minority communities reside in Ashton and Hyde, although we are seeing more diverse ethnic backgrounds moving into the area via asylum and refugee system. The % engagement across the wards is representative of the % of ethnic minority communities that we engaged in those areas. (See Graph 2).

Graph 4: Language



The largest language spoken within people we completed survey was Bengali with 63%, second largest was Urdu 23% third was Hindi 6% and 3% Polish as their first language. Other 6% language spoken completed were French, Kurdish, Arab. Over 90% of the women we surveyed needed language support indicating that majority of the women who completed the survey did not have English as their first language and therefore, were at a pre-entry level in their education.

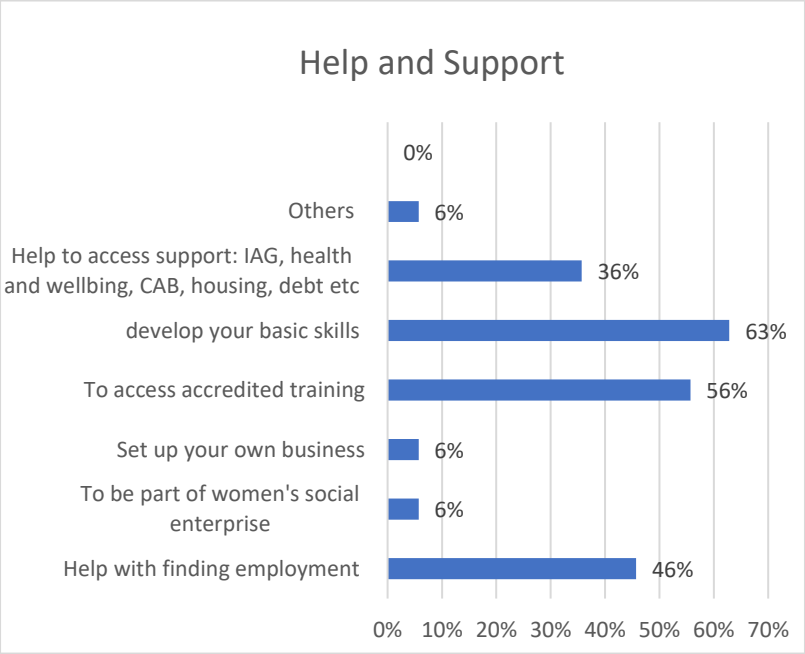
Graph 5: Employment Status



Participants selected multiple answers to this question. The data shows that women took on multiple roles, some were in education but also worked, some were unemployed and were seeking work or were carers.

56% of participants were unemployed,11% who are working, 9% in education, and 'others' 4% referred to being a housewife. The data showed that 26% are actively looking for work.

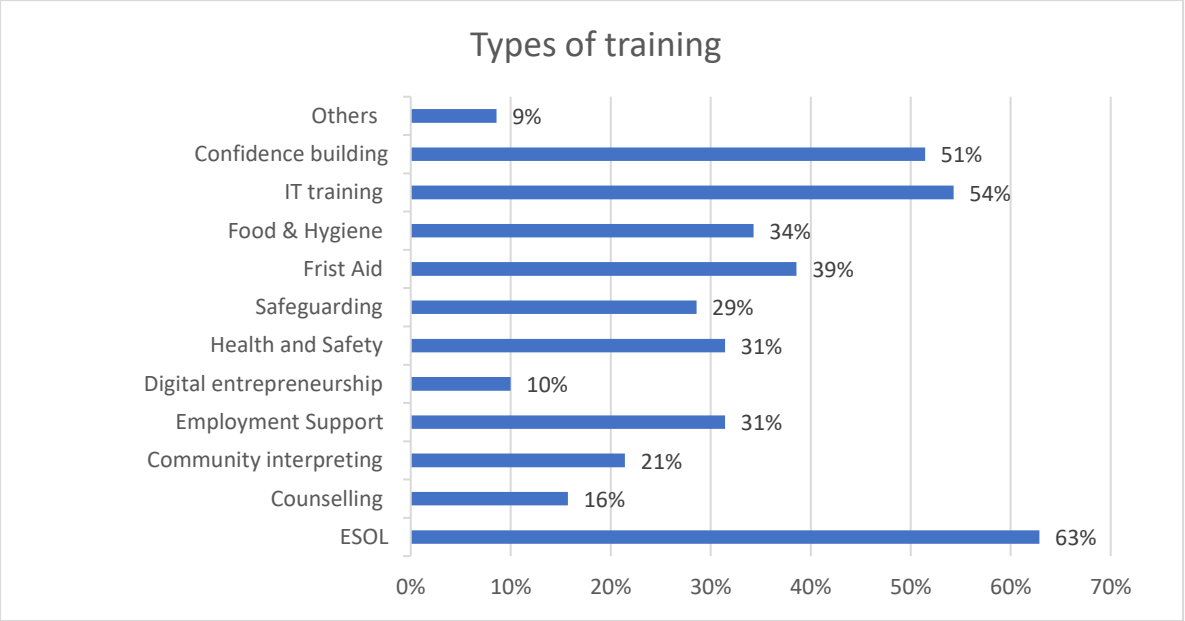
Graph 6: Help & Support Needed



Women answered more than one option for this question. 63% of the women we asked, said they wanted to develop their basic skills, this included pre ESOL, travel training and confidence building. 56% of women said they needed accredited training, with 46% saying they wanted help with finding employment. 36% wanted the access support service, with 6% wanting to be part of women's social enterprise, and support with starting their own business. 6% of women selected 'other' saying that they did not want support due to being of old age and some women stated that they have just had a new baby, so they were not able to work.

Majority of the women we consulted with had a language barrier and due to this they presented with low self-confidence and expressed interest to build their basic skills and develop. Referring to the ethnicity it shows the most people are from Bangladeshi heritage background, from our work on the project, we found that many women have never worked and take up the role of being a housewife, a role they often do not see as having transferable skills when seeking employment. It is positive that women want to develop their skills and access training and that there is an appetite to access support to find employment.

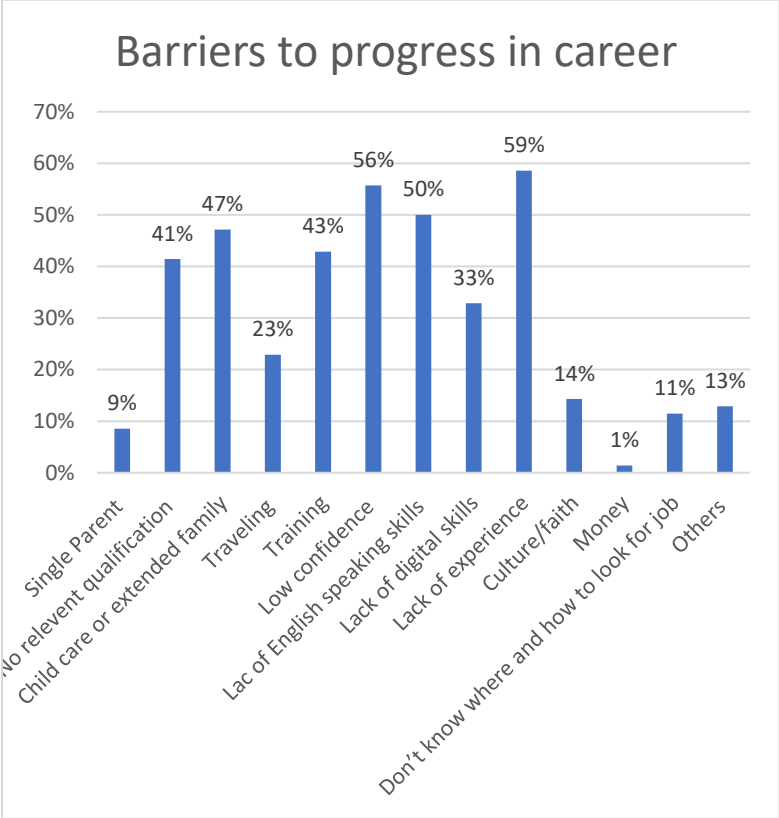
Graph 7: Types of Training



When we asked what type of training women would like to access, non-accredited learning was the most popular with 63% said they wanted ESOL, 54% IT, 51% confidence building and employment support 31%. This is reflective of the 90% of learning who required some level of language support when completing the survey.

Accredited learning was something women wanted to work towards, where, 39% of women said they wanted first aid training, food hygiene 34% health & safety 31%, safeguarding 29%, interpreting 21%, counselling 16%, and digital entrepreneurship 10%. 9% said ‘Other’ as they were not interested in training due to old age.

Graph 8: Barriers to progress

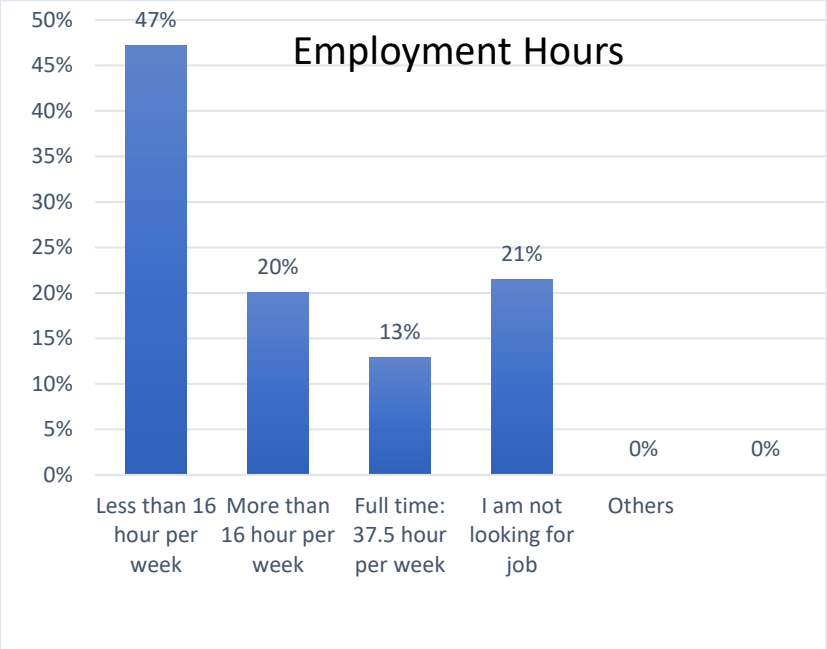


59% said that, due to lack of experience they are not able start their career, as they have never worked or have any experience of a working environment, 56% of women told us that they have low confidence when it comes to seeking employment. 50% felt that the lack of language skills hindered them to move go into their chosen careers. 47% of the women said due to childcare and extended family responsibilities, which is a cultural norm for many minority ethnic communities prevented them to move in to employment.

43% of participants said they had a lack of access to training that they needed to progress in their career or to get a job. They struggled to join training currently available external to DMNW due to the many personal challenges they have extending from family responsibilities and cultural inhibitions.

33% lacked digital skills, and 23% said they have never travelled on public transport and that it is an issue to progress in their career. They do not have self-confidence as they have never had the opportunity to learn. 14% said that another barrier to them not progressing is due to their culture/faith, where they faced institutional racism and micro aggressions which ostracised them and created a negative environment to work in – for many of these women, they have not had an opportunity to step through the door due to their attire. In addition, culturally, the male person in the household has a higher priority to stay in employment whilst the females adopt the role of a 'housewife', caring for the whole family. It was good to see this figure low, although, due the client group we engaged this may not be a true figure of the reality of the situation that women from minority ethnic background s face, specifically, if they are 'obviously' from a specific faith. 11% don't know how to look for jobs, 9% single parent and others 13% which include working and happy with the current hours they are doing. We spoke with one lady who said her disability prevented her from getting a job, that many job vacancies were not sympathetic to individuals with a disability and from a specific faith background.

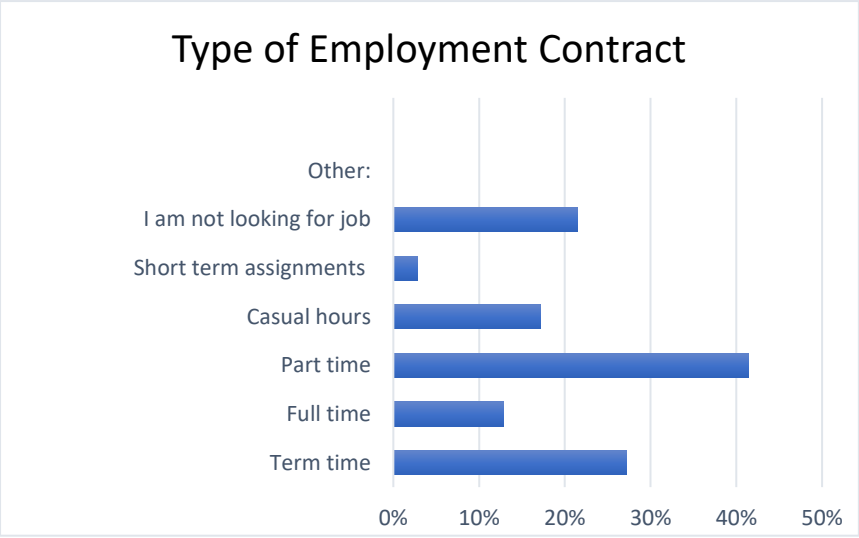
Graph 9: Type of Employment Hours



We wanted to find out what type of employment hours appealed to women we were working with and supporting.

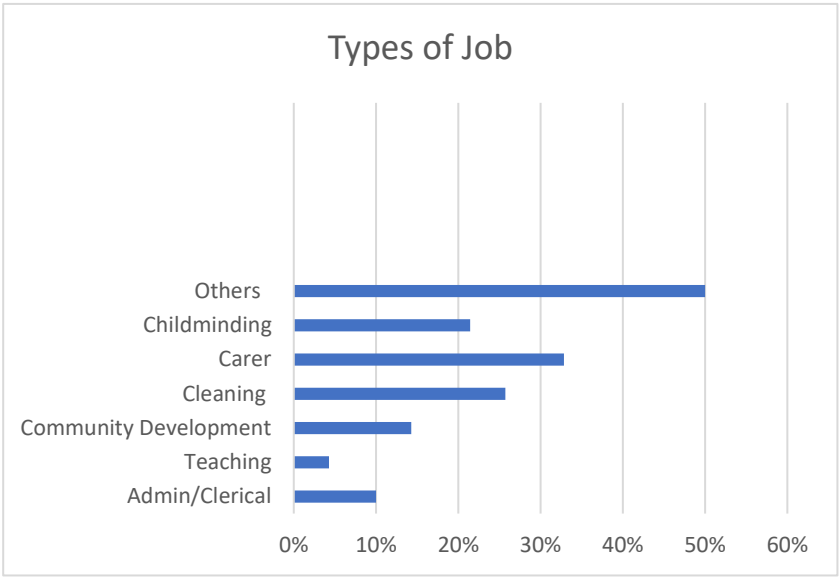
47% mentioned less than 16 hours, 20% more than 16 hours per week and 13% interested full-time job, we can also see 21% of women are not looking for jobs, this may be due to above factors relating to new mums and older age groups.

Graph 10: Employment Contract



41% women told us that they were looking for part time job due to family commitment and childcare responsibility. 27% mentioned that they preferred term time job due to this reason. 17% mentioned casual hours, 13% of women were seeking full time employment, 3% showed interest for short term assignment. 21% also mentioned that they are not looking for jobs due to lack of experience and language barriers.

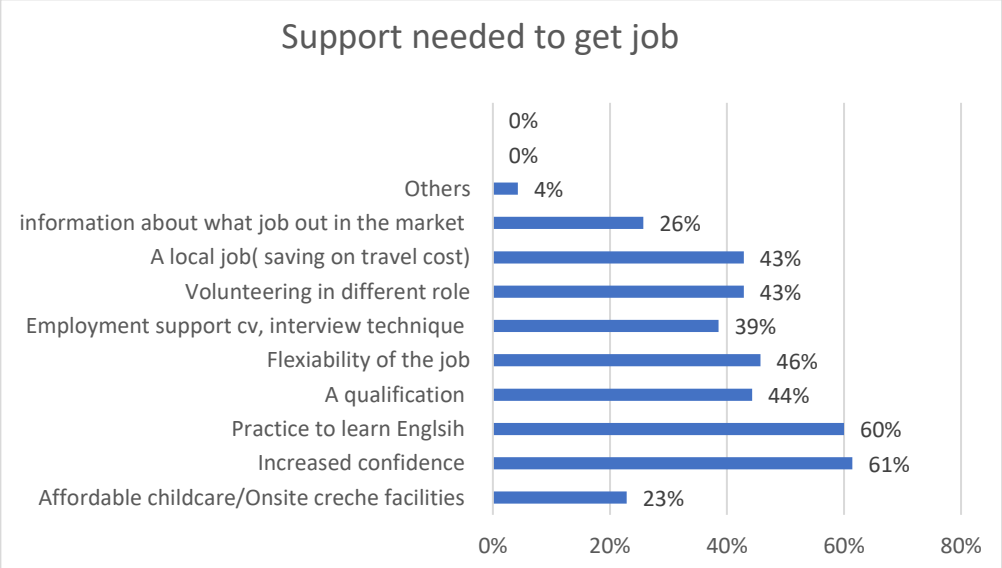
Graph 11: Types of Jobs



We wanted to capture the types of employment women were seeking. 33% of women wanted jobs in caring, 26% cleaning job, 21% childminding, 14% women showed interest community development roles, 10% admin and 4% teaching job. 50% of women told us of other options which included midday assistant, catering assistant, school dinner time helper, any school job, security, anything suitable for disabled person, suitable job for student, tailoring, interpreter, any jobs to get experience, retail and some told us that they were not looking for jobs due to reasons mentioned previously around old age and being a new mum. These results were quite alarming as it indicated that women from minority communities often had very low attainment and aspiration levels as majority of the carers pathways, they told us about were low paid positions.

Those women that told us that they would like to secure jobs also said that there was not much opportunity out there for them as many organisations seek previous experience which women from minority communities often fell short of. This opportunity was used to promote and raise awareness of voluntary opportunities and how this can aid in securing future employment.

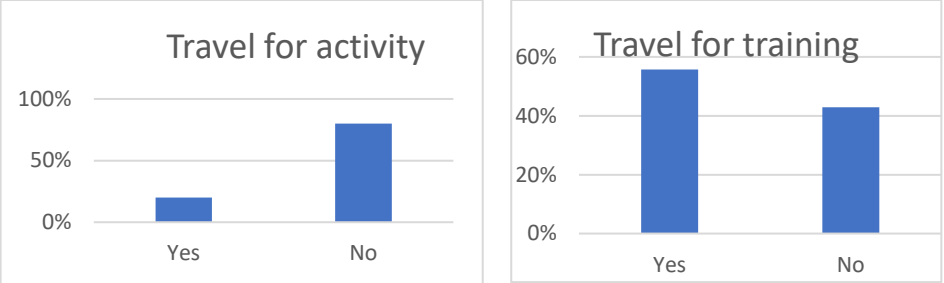
Graph 12: Support



We wanted to find out what help and support women needed to get into work. 61% women mentioned they wanted to increase their confidence; 60% women felt that if they improved their language speaking skills it will help them to secure a job in the future. Having flexibility in a job was crucial for 46% of the women, as they

told us that childcare and family responsibilities will remain part of their responsibility to maintain even when they do secure a job. 44% of women said that getting a qualification will help them to secure a job. 43% women sought local job opportunities to save time, cost of travel and to ensure they were local enough to still be able to take on family responsibilities. 43% were interested in volunteering roles, 39% would like specific help and support around employment and help towards reaching their goals, 26% wants to know information what job out in the market, 23% wanted affordable childcare.

Graph 13: Travel



We have asked women would they travel for training and activity outside the area they are living in. 56% women willing to travel for training and only 20% said they will travel for activities. 44% of women do not want to travel for training and 80% do not want to travel for activity, due to low confidence and travel cost and time. What we also found was that women did not know how to use public transport, which was often the case when they are reluctant to travel for opportunities. This indicates a high need for travel training interventions.

Limitations

It is important to note that this consultation has had its limitations. These included:

- Outreach: Engaging with people during the outreach in the marketplace was particularly challenging as people were hesitant to speak and not comfortable to give information on their employment status, an assumption was made that this data would be passed to the job centre despite making the purpose of the survey clear at the start. Some women were in a rush and so not completing all the questions.
- Time Consuming: The questionnaire itself had 17 questions and within this (although 6 were demographics), multiple choice and free text. Interpreting the questionnaire to residents on a one-to-one basis was time consuming which meant that to complete one questionnaire would take double the time, ultimately, we could not reach as many people as we would have liked.
- Variations between different staff asking question.
- Questionnaires passed to local groups and their leaders did not fully complete it, leaving many questions blank, therefore, these could not be counted.
- Participants ticked multiples answers to questions that only needed one
- We did not manage to get the survey completed by new Ukrainian arrivals in Tameside due to the nature of them being housed across multiple wards of Tameside and links into those communities are not yet established.

Conclusion

It is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic had impact to a group who are keen to access training and employment opportunities. The evidence indicates that the demand and need for employment support and training for women from ethnic minority communities is high and increased rapidly in the last 8 months as per our own data where over the past 3 years DMNW have engaged 260 individual women in our employment readiness project, over exceeding the 250 target, despite the government lockdowns delaying start of the full offer and then additional challenges that the project had to overcome and develop initiatives to combat so that women could start their learning journey.

In the first 16 months, the programme was redesigned to meet the imminent needs in the local minority ethnic communities as a result of gathering local data and feedback. We then conducted our yearly consultation which informed the future direction of the project in terms of upskilling women with right opportunities. This ultimately supported women to adjust, re-engage, build confidence, and enter the labour market. This is reflected in the 55 women who secured employment because of the project interventions. We promoted the project to women using variety of different engagement methods where we saw more and more women engage and start conversations around future employment opportunities. To date, everyone that engaged achieved positive outcomes and now are on their own journeys to continue to future employment.

From the consultation, the largest response we had was from women from the local Hyde Bangladeshi community (49%) and the Pakistani community in Ashton (23%), with 40% of the respondents between the ages of 31-40. This tends to be our largest group we have consistently engaged with in our work and an age group who are keen to either seek employment for the first time or go back into employment after a long break. This group also seems to present with barriers relating to language and IT skills which is a common preventor for them from securing jobs. This along with a lack of self-confidence is keeping these women behind and stagnating their potential achievements. 90% of the women that completed the survey, did not have English as their first language, therefore at a pre-entry level in their education.

When cross referencing the question answers, many of the women who requested ESOL were from a Bangladeshi background residing in Hyde. These women face multiple disadvantages arising from social, economic, racial inequalities, the experience of racism and lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity from services. In Hyde, Women tend to arrive from rural Sylhet into arranged marriages, they are socially isolated and often confined to domestic tasks within the extended family. Language and lack of cultural awareness on the part of some services and activities is a barrier to these women engaging into society and accessing activities and support services. In our experience, these women also tend to have low education attainment levels and therefore do not have English as their first language. The data shows that nearly 50% of women lack IT skills, presenting a barrier for securing employment. Data indicates that if a person can’t speak, read, or write in English, don’t have IT skills, newly arrived in the UK, it will hinder progress to employment. Women told us that

they find it difficult to access opportunities because lack of experience (59%) and confidence (56%). We can see that there is an appetite for accredited training which shows that women want to progress and develop.

Covid had a negative impact on many of these women as they remained in the home for long periods of time, losing their confidence in seeking employment and some lapsed in their learning journeys. Some of the ladies lost their job during covid and not been successful in getting back to work. BME unemployment rates during COVID19 was almost double that of White workers and where they were able to hold on jobs, these were often low paid.[8] Tameside is a deprived area; we know that digital poverty and digital literacy has impacted on people living here and subsequently impacted on progress towards securing employment.

The lack of digital skills seem to be an emerging gap in skills for many minority ethnic women. The skills not only develop confidence but enables them to develop skills for future employment. Our current programme has enabled women to develop these skills through our beginner's computer course, learning hub and one to one support to get women online. This means that women can now join and participate in other activities they feel they want to without any barriers.

The lack of confidence has been recurringly identified as a barrier for women. We often find that this is the case for many women accessing our existing provisions, so it is vital to ensure we work with women and support them through their journeys. Our confidence building course has been proven via feedback from learners, identify causes of low confidence and work towards identifying tools to help build these via peer support and interactive activities. This has empowered women to do things by themselves, become independent and try new things out of their comfort zones.

The data also highlighted an increased demand for accredited learning as well as non-accredited learning. This could indicate women who have developed via our current programme who are now ready to embark on accredited learning or work towards this.

Barriers & Challenges

The data identified specific barriers for women from minority ethnic communities to progressing into future employment, the top 3 featured lack of experience, low confidence and lack of English-speaking skills.

- **Lack of experience and low confidence**: we found out our ladies would like to go for employment however due to the lack of experience (59%) and confidence (56%) stopping them from securing a job. This is consistent with the migration from abroad to Tameside that we see in our programme engagement levels, where women moving into UK as a result of arranged marriages do not have English as their first language, many are not educated so have very little language proficiency

[8] The Sewell Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

in their own language. Coupling this with moving to a new environment and family presents additional challenges both mentally and physically. Interestingly, when we asked about types of employment women were seeking, almost all respondents mentioned low paid jobs, indicating a very low or no aspirations for senior positions, despite many of the women showing interest for accredited training opportunities! This also may be due to the lack of self-confidence, experience and opportunities for this.

- **Language:** For many of the women moving to the UK they face multiple challenges with moving to a new home, new family and new environment. This can have a huge impact on mental wellbeing for many of the women. To then get employment ready is a longer journey. Therefore, it is crucial to take a holistic approach, ensuring women are listened to and support to access the right service at the right time. The data found a large appetite for continuing learning and training opportunities for future employment, ESOL (63%) and basic skills learning remains high once again with 46% saying they wanted help with finding employment.

It is important to note that although the above barriers feature in the top three, there were multiple factors impacting on the women which prevents them from progressing in their learning journeys, these included:

- **Maintaining the family household and extended family responsibilities:** This was a key feature when women from minority communities were seeking employment. They did not want to compromise on this and were keen to look at different options for employment where 46% said flexibility was crucial and 43% wanted local jobs specifically. This is gender role is possibly stemmed from long standing cultural inhibitions and the role of women and men in a family home. This related back to 80% of women not wanting to travel out of their immediate area for activities. They also told us they will travel if suitable training was available for them but preferred to access training locally. These figures were interesting as only 23% were actively seeking a job at the time of the consultation, this would indicate that those that selected other, unemployed or in education were also wanting to secure employment.

  This community was hard hit by the pandemic; therefore, surplus money is not something many households have the luxury of having, therefore paying for childcare or travel costs is not something they can afford. The data also shows that the type of jobs many women are seeking tend to be low paid jobs, even going into these, they will struggle to meet the rising cost of childcare to help them to stay in a job and cover rest of the cost of living. Due to this reason, the flexibility and localism of vacancies is important, especially for those who are able to leave their child with family members whilst they are in work. 47% of women who completed the survey were interested in positions that were less than 16hours per week and only 13% were seeking full time positions! This stat correlated with the 41% of women seeking part time employment and 27% interested in term time jobs.

- **Training & qualification:** 43% of the women told us that the lack of accessible training / qualification and relevant training they needed to upskill themselves prevented them from moving forwards. The data shows that although there remains a huge need around basic skills training, many women are now wanting to progress and attained accredited qualifications that will help them in future job applications where approximately 35% of women expressed interest accredited learning including Food Hygiene, First Aid, Health & Safety and Safeguarding. The most popular types of employment women were seeking was in caring and cleaning/domestic roles, this was interesting as many of the women took on caring and domestic roles at home, which maybe a self-reflection of what they can do? It was also interesting to see that majority of the job aspirations were low paid jobs, coupled with low confidence and lack of English language proficiencies, indicates low aspirations.
- **Digital literacy:** The lack of digital literacy was never more evident than when the pandemic hit, and government issued a UK wide lockdown. This community was heavily affected by social isolation due to the lack of IT literacy and English language proficiency to get online and engage with family and friends and key vital services such as GP practices. The consultation data shows that nearly 54% women wanted IT training (second highest demand for training after ESOL), where 50% of women said it was a specific barrier to securing employment. Most job applications and processes are done online. Essential IT skills are required for people to apply for jobs as well as volunteering roles. This can seriously obstruct an applicant's success in applying for jobs or even hinder them gaining experience from the start.
- **Travel:** 43% of women mentioned they would like local jobs to save on travel and time. This is due to multiple reasons including, convenience of maintain household responsibilities, confidence issue, lack of knowledge of public transport and lack of English-speaking skills. Further adding to the challenges women face when seeking employment.

Recommendations

Despite the many barriers highlighted by the consultation results, it also highlighted what help and support is required to enable women from minority communities to get employment ready. This included:

- **Basic skills training:** 63% of women wanted to develop their basic skills, this included, conversational ESOL, digital skills and confidence building. Conversational ESOL itself enables women to become more confident, build skills and deal with everyday life tasks. DMNW will continue to meet the demand for ESOL to deliver locally working with partners to make sure the training is accessible to local women. Language is a huge barrier, and we will continue to support women to access English Language courses. We are starting to see more ESOL classes being delivered locally, however, take up is low. This may be due to the lack of engagement and trust people from minority ethnic background have and therefore reluctant to engage. These sessions also tend to be mixed gender, which is an additional barrier for those women who, due to their cultural and belief system, cannot engage. It is therefore important for us to continue to offer gender specific opportunities to remove these barriers

and challenges so women can also start to access opportunities for development.

- **Accredited training:** 56% of the women told us that a factor preventing them from progressing in their careers or moving closer towards employment was the lack of accessible accredited training opportunity. This was mainly due to compounding barriers including suitable time to work around childcare, travel times, travel costs, not knowing about them and cultural sensitivities.

  The consultation highlighted demand for first aid, safeguarding and health & safety as key training that was transferable and applicable to a multitude of roles. DMNW currently facilitates this training for ethnic minority women online and via e-learning opportunities and will continue as there is still a demand for this. Equally it is important for us to share our findings with other training and learning providers, so they are able to glean an understanding of the communities they are trying to reach.
- **Support to find employment:** 46% of women we survey said that they needed support to help them find employment, 6% said they were interested in business startups. Our pilot project on supporting women to set up their own business, one-to-one support and the learning hub were highly effective in supporting women to progress on their journey to future employment due to its localised venue and flexibility of support. Despite finances not highlighted as a huge barrier, women often expressed the need to be self-dependant.
- **Access support:** 36% needed support to access services due to language barriers and not knowing which service is available to get right support. In addition to this, women told us that childcare and travel costs were a key barrier for them to access opportunities to develop themselves for future employment. So, it is vital that provisions are delivered within school hours and during term time, that it is locally accessible at venues that are familiar to them or assist in supporting when this is a new venue. The community-based provisions will ensure travel costs and time is no longer a barrier to engaging in learning opportunities. Where they may be a cost for travel or childcare, we will ensure we are able to support the learners where possible to cover costs.
- **Sharing learning & best practice:** DMNW will continue to offer support and work with partners to share our learning and best practices, when engaging with minority communities, ensuring their services are inclusive of the communities they are working with. This includes working with partners with less eligibility criteria, understand and or seeking to understand the cultural sensitivities and who can offer local community-based provisions to help remove barriers to engagement for women from minority communities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Community Questionnaire

NLCF Annual Questionnaire Oct22