

Pride and Achievement:

Entrepreneurialism in Basingstoke's communities
with overseas heritage

Summary Report

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**ENTERPRISE
SOLUTIONS**

on **Goals** Vision Passion **Leadership** Independence
tion **Strength** Proactive **Confidence, Reward**
e **BOSS** Responsible Opportunity Money
ssion **Leadership** Independence **Assertive** Risk
e **Confidence** **Reward** **Flexibility** Open-minded
portunity Money **Profit** Innovation Determination

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Basingstoke Malayalee Cultural Association

Basingstoke Multicultural Forum

Basingstoke Multicultural Group for Women & Children

Basingstoke Muslim Association

Basingstoke Polish Association

Catholic Church of St Bede

Cross Links

HAMARA Women's group

Melrose Christian Fellowship

North Hampshire Caribbean and African Network NHCAN

Pentecostal Church of God

A number of individual participants who were either considering becoming a business owner or who were former business owners.

Absolutely Offices Ltd

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council - Community Development Officer

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades Basingstoke's population has changed as inward migration from overseas and internal migration has brought increased numbers of ethnic minority communities.

It's reasonable to assume that a growing population of residents with overseas heritage would fill the full range of roles found in a local community, not only because they reflect similar roles from their home communities, but also because individuals would take-up opportunities which are open to them. One such role is that of entrepreneur. In 2008 there appeared to be no detailed information about those with overseas heritage living in Basingstoke who have become entrepreneurs or who have an interest in becoming one.

This issue is important for a number of reasons:

- a) if appropriate support services are to be made available to aspiring and actual entrepreneurs, there is a need to understand the forces acting upon them and their decisions to become an entrepreneur or remain in business. For those ethnic minority communities, there is a need to understand the particular issues that affect them and whether they differ from those impacting on residents from the majority population.
- b) social cohesion is dependent upon the ability of minority groups to access appropriate roles enabling them to contribute to the full range of community activity. Entrepreneurialism is an important role in a community and it is important to understand whether there are barriers preventing participation and, if so, what action can be taken to enable proportionate representation.
- c) it complements a number of Basingstoke and Deane's strategies and initiatives such as, Diamond for growth, New Growth Point, Destination Basingstoke, etc.

Like other regions in the UK and across the SE of England, Hampshire has experienced demographic changes. The 2001 Census revealed that Hampshire had 1.5% of Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, a slight

increase on the 1991 Census of 1.34%. It also revealed that, in north Hampshire, Basingstoke had the second highest population of BME at 3.2%¹.

By 2004, ONS statistics showed Hampshire's non-white and white 'other' population had increased from 3.3% in 2001 to 4.5%, an increase of 38%. The white 'other' population increased from 2.6 to 3.0 over the same period: an increase of 16.5%².

In 2006/2007 National Insurance Number Registrations (NINR) in respect of non-UK nationals recorded 1620 new registrations³. Additionally, the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) statistics for EU migrants reveal there were 575 applications in the borough, representing 21% of the applications in Hampshire⁴.

The 2004 ONS population forecast data for Hampshire allied to NINR and WRS figures show a continuing rise in immigration into Basingstoke.

The limited volume and quality of data about people of overseas heritage residing in Basingstoke led Enterprise Solutions to believe there was a need to conduct qualitative research into entrepreneurship that would bring forward the 'voices' of residents in the borough.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Find out what motivates people of overseas heritage to become an entrepreneur
- Identify their needs
- Explore the barriers to entrepreneurship.



2. Brief review of the literature

Over the past 60 years Britain has experienced several waves of immigration from countries all over the world. Immigration to Britain after Indian independence in 1947 was followed by inflows of Black and Asian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s⁵. Later, several national crises in Eastern Africa resulted in further inflows of refugees, particularly between 1968 and 1976, and in the 1990s Britain saw increasing numbers seeking asylum from many regions of the world. More recently, we have seen inflows from an enlarged EU.

In 2003 the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) predicted that by 2010 only 20% of the UK working population will be white, male, able-bodied and under 45⁶.

Economic conditions in the UK have encouraged people from the New Commonwealth and Eastern Europe to work in the UK. For example, in 2001 the UK had 57,000 fewer nurses than needed to staff the National Health Service. As a consequence, the NHS launched an overseas recruitment and migration programme⁷. Recently the London School of Economics investigated the short, medium and long term solutions to the population slow down and population aging, exploring a way forward for the UK. Their report investigated *'Do we need more migrants and babies?'*⁸ It concluded that in the short to medium term immigrants were needed or Britain would face a shortage of workers, manpower and skills.

Today, the socio-economic composition of ethnic minority groups consist of newly arrived immigrants and people with overseas heritage having been born and brought up within the UK. In addition, internal migration has increased as people move across regions and there is evidence of migration from Reading as people seek employment and relatively lower cost housing.

The Parekh Report described changing dynamics of the population, where a one-size-fits-all approach no longer meets the need of the 21st century. *'Britain needs to be 'One Nation' - but understood as a community of communities, and a community of citizens, not a place of*

*oppressive uniformity based on a single substantive culture'*⁹

Since 1990, demographic changes in Britain has caused it to become a more diverse and multi-cultural society (ONS, 2005) The *'traditional British citizen is changing'*. A central concern of government policymakers has become: *'how Britain can become a cohesive political community and foster a common sense of belonging among its diverse regional, national, religious, ethnic and other communities'*.¹⁰

The notions of equality and diversity have become pivotal in the social cohesion agenda where Citizenship and its obligations and entitlements have become of greater concern.¹¹ In this respect, the opportunities and supportive infrastructure for entrepreneurialship available to those of overseas heritage have importance as one routeway to social cohesion by virtue of providing a pathway to economic independence and the creation of new economic networks and markets.



Whilst there is literature on the barriers faced by BME community groups, for example *Bangladeshi Women and Self-employment*, (2008), and *Finance for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: Comparisons of Ethnic Minority and White Owned Businesses* (2005) there is a gap in the reporting of factors influencing people with overseas heritage to become self employed in Basingstoke.

In Canada¹² the non-recognition of credentials from foreign countries, denies many immigrants the opportunity to continue their career paths and may result in negative work attitudes. Many immigrants react to these constraints by relying heavily on ethnic support networks and other community resources. This suggests that labour market outcomes are associated with structural market processes and constraints bearing down on the labour force.

In his 2005 report, Frank van Tubergen¹³ provides evidence on the ethnic entrepreneur phenomenon in Australia, Canada and the United States and 14 countries in the European Union. Tubergen's data revealed that:

- immigrants from non-Christian countries of origin have higher odds of self-employment;

- higher levels of unemployment among the host community increase the odds of self-employment;
- self-employment is more frequent among immigrant communities that are small, highly educated and have a longer settlement history.

In Germany, Amelie Constant¹⁴ identified push and pull factors influencing self-employment amongst men. The report commented that married immigrants are more likely to go into self-employment, but less likely when they have young children. Immigrants with foreign passports are more likely to be self-employed than native Germans and that immigrants suffer a strong earnings penalty if they feel discriminated against while they receive a premium if they are German educated. This outcome may reveal immigrants lacking the confidence to apply for higher paid work and adopting self-employment as a consequence.

Whilst unemployment in Basingstoke is relatively low, the demographic data of research participants showed many were of long standing residence in the UK. Many had higher level qualifications. Over half of those with an interest in business were non-Christian.



In the UK, Ramsden et al refers to the 'ethnic penalty' where ethnicity is the common variable that differentiates outcomes in the labour market¹⁵. The penalty refers to the poor outcomes experienced by individuals often due to factors out of their control, including ethnicity, skin colour, difference in speech and ideas of acceptable behaviour.

Discrimination is a significant part of the ethnic penalty which is complex and multifaceted and a major barrier. It can be perceived or be real, direct or indirect.

A 2006 study illuminated how services across the board lack knowledge of the specific needs of ethnic minorities. As a consequence, there is a low take up of support programmes and use of services by these groups, low awareness of services within ethnic minority communities and high prevalence of poor outcomes for groups¹⁶.

Parker (2004)¹⁷ suggests that entrepreneurship is greater for immigrants and ethnic minorities than their own indigenous counterparts. This was the case for a large variety of newly arrived ethnic minorities in a large variety of countries.

Immigrants are better educated and highly motivated, they have better access to ethnic

resources and to niche markets within their communities. They view entrepreneurship as the easiest way to rapidly accumulate wealth and may otherwise face 'blocked mobility' or discrimination in the traditional work place due to low language skills etc. Immigrants are less risk averse given they have selected to take the risk to leave their own countries and immigrants have a greater tendency for employment within sectors that have a stronger tradition of self-employment.

In the UK a new generation of ethnic minority entrepreneurs is starting to appear, in emerging markets, who possess less survivalistic orientation than their predecessors and are more growth orientated.

As this trend continues at UK level, it is necessary to gain insights into the local context. What forces are encouraging or dissuading potential entrepreneurs? Do the forces reflect the research findings above and what are the local responses to the changing economic climate?



3. Methodology

The objective of this research was to find the range of responses to, and extent of interest in, self employment held by people with overseas heritage in Basingstoke. In particular, we wanted to:

- Find out what motivates people to become entrepreneurs
- Identify their needs
- Explore the barriers to entrepreneurship
- Get the views of those people:
 - already involved in entrepreneurial activity
 - who intend to set up businesses or become self-employed in the future
 - former business owners.

In 2008, Basingstoke recorded twenty migrant community and faith organisations that are known to the borough council. Community and faith leaders were initially targeted as the most effective way of opening a dialogue and engaging with their members and the specific target groups. Leaders were interviewed in order to acquire a profile of the respective communities, gather information about their views and perceptions relating to their members interest in self-employment and identify existing entrepreneurs and those who might be interested in being one.

A qualitative approach was used in the research. The prime methodology being based upon one-to-one semi-structured interviews lasting about one hour with:

- a) **Community leaders** or their representative and faith leaders
- b) **Would-be entrepreneurs.** The objectives were to identify what is motivating them, whether have any support needs and any barriers they are encountering. Five would-be entrepreneurs were interviewed
- c) **Business owners.** The objectives were to identify their motivations, needs, any barriers they had encountered and hear about their experiences. We interviewed six business owners.



- d) **Former business owners.** The objectives were to identify what had motivated them to set up, whether they had any support needs and from whom, any barriers they had encountered and how they overcome these. Four former business owners took part.

In addition, we held group interviews with:

- e) **Groups** of people representing their respective communities. The objective was to identify the extent of interest held by them in self-employment. Groups consisted of those who aspired to be their own boss and others with no interest. The sample included male and female participants, a range of ages and a range of residency length in the UK. We held six one hour group interviews. Twenty three people took part.

All participants completed a demographic questionnaire to acquire a demographic profile of the community. Information collected includes: sex, age, occupation, country of origin, length of time in UK, length of residency in Basingstoke and their religion.

4. Results and Analysis

This section will take in turn each of the main categories being investigated: **motivation** of those in or going into business, **needs** of those in or going into business and **barriers** preventing access to entrepreneurialship.

Motivations for Becoming Self-Employed

The data from participants identified the following motivations for going into business:

- The ethnic penalty
- The status of being 'my own boss' and the autonomy of 'working for myself'
- Access to informal advice and support from a range of community sources
- Having a good business idea or an instinctive feel for what might work
- The expectation of extra money and profit
- A passion for a particular trade or skill
- An ability to follow a particular life style choice which afforded more flexibility particularly for those with family or childcare responsibilities

Aspiring Business Owners

Over half of the aspiring business owners had had previous experiences of operating businesses overseas and were frustrated with their current employment status. A female respondent, W-B, expressed: *'I am bored, I have lots of energy and I want to be independent. I had a business in Egypt'*.

There was evidence that participants were dissatisfied with promotion prospects in their current employment, W-E said: *'I feel I have gone as far as I can go in this country (in nursing). The opportunities are there for me but I feel I would not get the respect of my fellow workers. Young people who have come in as students, who I taught, are now managers'*.

Another contributor W-A said: *'If you are employed you do not get anything after years of employment, no promotion, no training and only a small pay increase annually'*.

Many aspiring business owners indicated they were motivated by what they perceived as a more flexible approach to work. It was seen as both a way of having greater responsibility and allowed them to manage their own time.

A young woman with childcare responsibilities explained how she felt self employment would meet her personal aspirations, her childcare needs and afford her greater autonomy to manage her lifestyle. Participant, W-C, said: *'Being a single mum I wanted to do something for myself and on my own. With my childcare responsibilities I wanted to fit my work around this and manage my time and life'*.

The appeal of earning more money was a major incentive for many participants considering going into business. A male respondent, W-A, who had owned a business overseas said *'Advantages? Your own boss, all the money, all the profit for me, more commitment, more profit'*.

Existing Business Owners

Many of the existing business owners operating in Basingstoke indicated they had been motivated by the challenge of working for themselves and the appeal of being their own boss.

Some participants had been unhappy with their employment. In particular, a female contributor, B-D, said she set up her business as she was, *'Fed up working for the idiot'*.

Many had gained personal satisfaction through self-employment. Respondent B-D held the view that: *'it's good to work for yourself. You can do things properly, do them well and the way you like'*.

When asked to reflect on how they started up their business, many revealed informal business advice and guidance helped give them confidence in the business start-up process. This advice had come from: family members, friends, associates in business and other sources with knowledge of the business system in England.

A home worker and tutor, B-A, described how she had: *'Informal support from my sister who has run a similar business for 10 years. She advised me how to register as a private tutor'*.

Another, B-B, said: *'I have an informal network. I speak with other business owners'*.

Former Business Owners

Many of those who had a business that is now closed started the venture over three years ago, with the longest being 40 years. None of these proprietors could recall seeking business support from a formal enterprise agency. Many were advised by friends and family, others through

networks and trade associations. Respondent F-A, explained: *'.....support from my husband. My brother-in-law was a trainee accountant helped with accounts'*.

Participant, F-E said *'Yes I had informal support and formed a child minding group.....which started in each others homes then as it got bigger it became an established service which was based in the Vyne school'*.

When asked whether they belonged to a local business network organisation or club, one proprietor, F-B, who started a business 35 years ago, listed a number of support organisations he had used. These included: *'Basingstoke Chamber of Commerce, trade associations and I was a member of the Institute of Directors'*.

Community Leaders

Community leaders perceived that making money was one of the strong factors motivating their members going into business. They felt there was a number of push factors influencing members as many had business ideas and skills which were under utilised, in essence more evidence of the ethnic plenty. L-G said: *'motivation, creativity, making money, responding to a need identified in the market'*.



Needs Of Entrepreneurs

In seeking the needs of former, current and aspiring business people from ethnic minority communities, the following were identified:

- Acquisition of business skills
- An opportunity to gain experience of doing business in the UK
- Opportunities to improve English language skills for those for whom English is an additional language (EAL)
- Business information in a simple format
- Business support available in a range of formats
- Access to resources, in particular finance, to set up and run the business
- A supportive network of business and specialist business advice

Aspiring Business Owners

A large number of aspiring business owners said they would need help to develop their business skills.

One female respondent, who also had experience of running a business overseas, felt she would benefit from knowing more about the social practices of doing business in the UK. Respondent, W-D, said: *'Yes, I am okay with the business side of things. But I do need experience of doing business in the UK and need to know more about the customer'*.

Access to information was also stated as an issue for all the would-be business owners who participated in the research. They indicated a need for both technical and practical information.

Participant W-A explained a need for an opportunity to compare his business with other business in order to judge relative success: *'I would like to join one (business club) and would like to find out how other businesses are doing'*.

Business Owners

Many of those already in business declared a need for information and business support. There were several references made about having access to a range of information. Some had sought advice from other businesses.

Others had sought informal advice. A Polish business proprietor, B-D, an owner of a retail shop explained: *'We did not need it (formal advice) we had our friend who told us everything'*.

Access to information in appropriate formats was another key issue for business owners. Retailer, B-D, explained their need for: *'simple explanations, people use a lot of computers and always send you to use the computer, but I, like others, do not like or use computers'*.

A female Sikh business owner, B-A, spoke about her own needs and also referred to what she thought might be needed by other members of her community: *'people who are not particularly westernised, like my mum and relatives, may need more support in the early stages'*.

Resources were also mentioned. Respondent B-C felt there was a need for small businesses to have access a range of resources: *'Successful businesses (need) to share their experiences with new businesses and business advice. Small businesses need money to set up and then the right people to run it. Exchange of ideas and role models'*.

Former Business Owners

Former proprietors referred to their experience of accessing business support. When asked whether they had any advice or support when setting up, many indicated they had not. One respondent F-D said: *'No, we did not really know of any'*.

Participant, F-A, commented: *'Business support programmes for ethnic minorities need to be targeted through community groups'*.

Group Discussion

A large number of participants expressed a need for information and business support to develop their business.

When asked if they knew where to go in Basingstoke for business support, many respondents revealed they did not know where to go. Contributor F-K, said there was a need for: *'Information and basic business training'*.

Contributor, F-B, said *'I would not know where to go'*.

One participant, F-C explained: *'I need to know how to do business in the UK'*.

Some contributors were very specific about their information needs. Many wanted information about the legal requirements for business. This was expressed by participant F-D, as: *'Need to know more about the law and allowance for business people'*.

Business support was another need identified by focus group respondents. In particular, a group of Muslim women were explicit about their needs. One respondent, F-A, explained she was too shy to approach the big advisers. Respondent, F-B, agreed declaring: *'I would go to someone more approachable'*.

Barriers To Entrepreneurship

The evidence identified a number of barriers experienced by people from ethnic minority communities when setting up a business:

- Access to formal business support and their perception of it
- Not knowing where to go and how to get the right information
- Differences between the cultures of community members, other communities and that of the host community
- Lack of business skills
- Perceptions of the demands of being in business
- Existing employment commitments reducing the willingness to take risks
- Limited proficiency in the command of English language
- Access to finance for start-up purposes

Aspiring Business Owners

Many aspiring business owners identified access to business support as a barrier to setting up in business. Many were not getting access to business support, nor did they know where to get it. Participants L-A said: *'I have no idea where to go'*.

Another, W-B, responded: *'I currently get advice from the CAB. I would ask them to help me with business support'*.

For respondent, L-D, who was in employment, time was a barrier. When asked where she

would go for business start-up advice or support, she said: *'Nowhere, as I have not got around to it yet, and I am also working'*.

All respondents felt they would benefit from access to specialist support or professionals skills. Participant, W-E, said: *'Yes, I have no business skills. I would need skills in managing finance, managing other professionals, marketing, legal aspect of business, taxation, etc'*.

Business Owners

Many of those in business indicated that access to information was a major barrier. These respondents had lived in the UK all their lives. A Female participant, B-A, said: *'No, I did not know there was help for businesses. I knew there was support for childcare businesses, but not that there was general support for businesses'*.

Others indicated that limited language skills were a barrier. Participant, F-A spoke of the hurdles experienced by people in her community: *'Language can be a barrier to seeking advice, they do not have the confidence to ask'*.

One business owner commented that for some female members of her community, cultural and religious values could be a barrier. She explained that: *'Prejudices exist in their own ethnic group, culture and community. Twenty years ago an Asian woman in business would not be heard of, particularly, if they come from an environment where this is not encouraged. Some Asian women with degrees get married and take on the traditional role of mother and home maker and never consider going into business. Also the in-laws may have old fashioned views and not approve of such a role for a woman. Sikhs tend to encourage both girls and boys to achieve and therefore both would be encouraged to go into business'*.



Former Business Owners

The majority of former business owners felt the lack of access to information and not knowing where things were had been a barrier.

When asked if they sought advice or support when setting up from an enterprise agency, respondent, F-A, said: *'No, I did not know they existed'*.

When asked whether they felt they had access to the type of business support they needed, another participant, F-C, commented: *'No - not because it was not there, more because we did not know where to look'*.

This participant went on to explain how important it was to be part of a local network with English people through which informal business support could be available. He explained he had experience of operating a business overseas but had not come to the UK with the intention of setting up a business. He wanted to work as an employee. However, he was not able to find appropriate employment, falling victim of the ethnic penalty. Later, through employment he was offered the opportunity to buy the business by the widow of his former employer. But in those early days, as a new business owner, not being part of a network proved to be a barrier to the growth of their business.

Community Leaders

Community and religious leaders had a lot to say concerning the impact of culture, lifestyle practices, religion or other factors linked to their heritage that acted as barriers to participation in economic activity and which required a different type of business support. Examples of their understandings are as follows: *'Dress code - women wearing non western dress code - wearers feel uncomfortable and lack confidence about meeting people in new environments - perception of the host community or the business person..... Childcare is a huge barrier can restrict women from participating in events - crèche is acceptable'*.

5. Conclusions

The research revealed a body of business activity in Basingstoke owned and run by people of overseas heritage. Evidence also revealed a range of aspiring entrepreneurs and those who had run businesses in the past.

The principle conclusions arising from the evidence are:

- A range of factors motivated individuals to begin their own businesses. Perhaps of concern is evidence of Ram's "ethnic penalty". Participants mentioned instances where constraints in existing or previous employment had led to a desire to move through a glass ceiling to new opportunities for personal advancement.
- Improved income progression was also a motivating factor as was a need to create a flexible lifestyle. Male business owners tended to be older than females and there was evidence to suggest that due to family situations men tend to be more risk averse, leaving the decision to begin a business to later in life when financial circumstances were on firmer ground. Females, on the other hand, tended to enter business ownership as a way of dealing with family circumstances by seeking flexible working conditions with improved income potential.
- Having access to support and information was also an important factor in setting up a business. Consistent with Bauder's 2006 study, existing and former business owners used community support networks, rather than formal business support services, to gather information and advice. Community support seemed to be a pre-requisite to taking the decision to establish a business and became a form of "security-blanket" around the new business owner.
- Many of the existing and aspirational entrepreneurs mentioned business knowledge and skills as key needs to be met. The business skills tended to fall into two categories: firstly, technical skills relating to specific areas of activity such as marketing and finance and, secondly, a general awareness of how to do business in the UK.
- For some there was a clear need to improve their English language and, in particular, technical business language. There was also a need for a better understanding of finance - where to access it, how to apply for it and how better to manage it.
- A number of barriers were identified. Three recurrent barriers were, firstly, the cultural interface not only between other minority communities, but also between individual communities and the majority community. This barrier inhibited communication and effective marketing. Secondly, was the economic position of the aspirant business owner. Often originating from a relatively low income base, the risk associated with a move to self-employment and the lack of start-up capital acts as a clear barrier to entrepreneurialship. The third barrier was the lack of access to capital. It was clear from participants that many had little idea of where to obtain finance from nor the practical process of applying for it.

6. Recommendations

Taking the evidence into account and with the objective of improving the conditions which brings those from overseas heritage to a sustainable entrepreneurial role, we make the following recommendations:

1. There should be available community based business support services run by, and for, those with overseas heritage. Such services should complement and work in partnership with existing services and provide a bridge between community based information and support to other enterprise support services.
2. Such services should reflect best practice and be of national standard (such as SFEDI).
3. Within the services offered should be a system of mentoring for aspiring entrepreneurs and new start-up businesses. Mentors should include, wherever possible, people drawn from businesses run by those with overseas heritage and a fee (set within a financial framework) should be available to those providing mentoring support.
4. There should be a system of affordable micro-credit loans to new businesses.
5. Existing business support systems should use social networks including faith and community groups as portals to access aspiring and current businesses and deliver tailored services to them.
6. Training support should be developed for aspiring and existing business proprietors on specific business skills, such as health and safety, legal requirements for business, (including taxation) marketing and general market orientation in the UK. The provision should pay regard to the nature and needs of the target client group and ensure the delivery systems maximise participation. This may involve all women groups, community based provision, differentiated timing and the provision of crèche facilities.
7. Courses in English language for business should be provided with differing access formats.
8. The provision of all services should acknowledge the differences between cultures and between men and women. Tailoring services to the individual and greater personalisation.
9. There should be developed a local network for ethnic minority enterprise supported through a variety of communication media including a newsletter, website and events.



A full version of this report is available at the Enterprise Solutions website at: www.entsols.org

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