

CEDAW Article 14: A Case Study of issues affecting rural women North East of England

1. Key issues concerning rural women and recommendations for action

Through the process of compiling this case study, the following key issues concerning rural women were identified, alongside with corresponding recommendations to the UK Government surrounding Article 14 of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

1.1 Racism, gender stereotyping and intersectional discrimination against women at all levels, with a particular institutional blindness surrounding rural BME Women.

- a. Measures to be put in place to support the effective engagement and participation of women with intersectional perspectives in rural public life, including the design and delivery of targeted and specialist services for BME women around: mental health, VAWG, Hate Crime and issues arising from women's role within the family.
- b. Investment in independent support structures and resources for rural BME women in response to the growth and diversity of BME populations in rural areas.

1.2 Inadequate housing, transport and communications infrastructure that compounds the isolation of rural women and prevents access health and social care services, childcare, training, education and employment.

- a. Investment in rural infrastructure including transport, housing and community based services.
- b. The application of gender mainstreaming to transport and housing policies as well as solutions, with smaller, locally focused initiatives to respond to geographical challenges.
- c. The UK Government to deliver its commitment to rolling out broadband to rural areas by 2022.

1.3 Lack of training, education and employability opportunities that prevents rural women's equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment.

- a. Locally based education, training and employability programmes for women living in rural areas, linked to holistic and culturally sensitive support, with funded specialisms to address the particular barriers for: BME women, parents of children with additional needs, and women with additional learning needs.
- b. Incentives for partnership work with key agencies and organisations to provide additional support for rural women interested in setting up their business. This should include: improved access to start-up funds; creative solutions; sensitive, women focused approaches to address intersectional barriers; ongoing female-friendly support and investment in micro-enterprise initiatives and programmes.

2. Background and Context

2.1 CEDAW and rural women

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, consists of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.¹

Article 14 requires States Parties to take account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

In its Eighth periodic report submitted to CEDAW (2017), the UK Government reported upon measures take to: supporting rural women's businesses, improve access to Broadband and taking women's needs into account when providing rural transport.² This report considers the effectiveness of these measures in relation to the specific requirement of Article 14, drawing upon evidence from case study of rural women in the North East of England.

2.3 Geography and demography

Northumberland

According to the newly released State of the Nation Report 2016 from the Social Mobility Commission, Northumberland rates 288th out of 324 local authority areas as measured by limitations for education and career prospects. The areas struggling most to achieve economic progress for local people are rural and / or coastal areas where traditional industries such as mining and fishing have declined or ended. Northumberland has many pockets of such disadvantage, which are exacerbated by lack of infrastructure such as high-speed broadband, poor transport links and lack of local services. While tourism is a growth industry, opportunities for work are characterised by seasonal, low paid and low status jobs with zero-hours or rota based conditions. The persistence of gender stereotyping makes it hard for women to break into better paid work for instance in STEM industries.

Berwick-Upon-Tweed is one of the most sparsely populated and one of the largest constituencies in England with many scattered towns and communities. It has a significantly ageing population, with an overall average of 23% residents over 65, and over 40% in rural towns such as Wooler and Belford. Bamburgh is the ward with the highest number of older people living alone in the county.³ This coupled with a fourfold increase in numbers of babies and children with disabilities (reported to parents and carers by Head of Commissioning, local Children's Services), makes disability and welfare concerns of high importance.

The area also has some significant pockets of BME populations, mainly migrant workers and their families (for the profile over time) with recognition that they are often highly skilled but in low paid work.⁴ Prejudice and instances of hate crime have significantly increased, by 48% post-Brexit vote in the Northumbria Police area.⁵ There are also high numbers of families in poverty, for instance in Berwick East, where income deprivation is significantly worse than the national average.⁶ It is only in the last few years that there has been any visible LGBT community, with plans for the first Pride March this year.

Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in County Durham¹

The BME population is growing across the UK and the North East of England, and also in County Durham. Long-standing BME communities such as Black, Asian and Chinese from Commonwealth countries that have been settled in the UK are now also witnessing the growth of a diversity of BME communities. The population continues to grow not only as a result of natural growth but also from continued migration from the EU and resettlement of refugees as a result of conflicts in the world.

The BME population in County Durham is growing and increasingly culturally diverse due to external and internal migration, these communities are also relatively small and dispersed in mainly white, largely rural areas. There are according to the 2011 Census 1.8 % of BME people County Durham and 4.2% in and around Durham City. ⁷ Many of the towns and villages grew due to the 100+ coal mines of the 19th and 20th Centuries which were all closed down by the end of the 1960's. Many are listings of the 'whitest' towns in the country, including Easington which was number 1. According to the 2011 Census, 1.8% of people in County Durham are BME and 4.2% in and around Durham City.

Many BME women are new to County Durham or have just settled down in the UK. The BME population in County Durham is fluid and ever changing. A great number of BME UK residents moved out after a few years for various reasons, mainly because of the lack of opportunities available to them and families.

Durham City has the largest BME population made of UK residents: professionals and business owners and staff as well as the growing number of university international students and staff. The four hospitals and other medical staff form a significant number in the based in the city and other localities across the county. Outside Durham City BME individuals and families are scattered across the county. Eastern European families and individuals are mainly concentrated in the North and the South of the County because of manufacturing industries (food, catering, cleaning etc...). Over the last 30 years there has been an increasing number of small businesses and fast food outlets scattered across small towns and villages (Chinese and Far Eastern restaurants, Asian and Middle Eastern) and a continuous growth of young mixed heritage families, and with time their grown-up children tend to leave County Durham because of a lack of available and suitable employment and cultural opportunities, and especially growing up facing assaults on their identity and having their 'Britishness' being questioned.

Over a four year period in County Durham and Darlington constabulary, reports of hate indecent has steadily increased (32% increase in total). Race hate crimes remained level over three years and peaked in 2016/17 with a 49% increase.⁸

Table 1: Illustrating increased in hate crime and indecent in Durham & Darlington Constabulary over a 4 year period

Year	Indecent/ % increase		Crimes/ % increase	
2013-14	242		134	
2014-15	262	+8%	131	-2%
2015-16	282	+17%	134	
2016-17	320	+32%	199	+49%

¹ The term BME refers here to Black and all Minority Ethnic individuals and groups and also to people facing isolation, marginalisation, discrimination and violence as a result of being perceived as "foreign."

3. Methodology for the case study

The evidence presented in this was collated by two community development workers with a long track record of working with women in rural communities: Ijjou Derrache Thompson, coordinator of Diverse Women's Network, member of the North East Regional Race, Crime and Research Network and formerly employed by Darlington & County Durham Racial Equality Council; and Julia Lyford, coordinator of Fourth Action Women's Workshop, member of the NE Rural Affairs Forum, the NE Equalities Coalition, active in the Local Action Group for Leader Rural European funds and formally regional adviser to the NE Equality and Diversity Forum.

Fourth Action Women's Workshop has been supporting rural women since 2005, by offering mentoring and holistic support; accredited vocational training and support for non-traditional career routes through an innovative self-build project; young women's group activities and support; networking opportunities for and with women in micro-enterprise; and playing an active role in creating links, small local groups and inclusive opportunities for BME, disabled and LBi women living rurally.⁹

Diverse Women's Network established in 2014 as is an organization of Black and minority ethnic (BME) women living, working or studying in County Durham. It aims to create a network to address the social and cultural isolation of BME women in County Durham, facilitate friendships and develop support structures offer guidance and assistance, raise awareness of issues affecting BME women in County Durham and in a rural context both locally and regionally and promote inclusiveness, diversity and respect. To date, 230 women have attended DWN's our meetings, events and activities. The women are from 52 different nationalities, various ethnic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds, from different ages and education attainments living in Durham City and various parts of County Durham (and a few from other parts of the North East).



Figure 1: Illustrating the nationalities of members of Diverse Women's Network

Evidence is also drawn from an online survey conducted for the North East consultation for shadow CEDAW report, England (March 2018). A total of N=33 participants provided responses to the survey. Overall, 32 respondents provided information on whether they represented an

individual woman or another organisation or public body. Of the 32 respondents, 34% (n=11) represented an individual woman, 31% (n=10) represented a women's community organisation or community group, 19% (n=6) represented another voluntary organisation or community group, 6% (n=2) represented a Local Authority, 3% (n=1) represented a trade union, and 3% (n=1) represented a university or college.

A total of 11 participants provided responses to survey questions on rural women's issues in the North East. In the survey conducted for the North East consultation for shadow CEDAW report respondents were asked to indicate the sources of evidence on the key issues they identified and make recommendations on the actions local and national UK Government should take to address these issues. A total of 8 respondents provided evidence for at least 1 key issue, 3 provided evidence for at least 2 key issues and 3 provided evidence for 3 key issues. Overall, 5 respondents provided information on the actions national and local government should take on at least 1 key issue, 3 provided information on at least 2 key issues and 3 provided information on 5 key issues. Respondents answers were matched across key issues, evidence and action by government (see Table 1).

The findings of the survey and the case study were presented to 23 participants as a Regional consultation event for the CEDAW shadow report (England), on Wednesday 14th March 2016 at Alington House Community Association in Durham City. This was one of 6 national consultation events organised by Women's Resource Centre and funded by WRC. Of the 25 participants: 13 were representatives of a women's VCOs, 4 were representatives of other VCOs, 2 representative of other public body, 2 Trade Union representatives, 1 representative of a University, 1 representative of a rural Local Authority and 1 individual woman.

Included in the Regional consultation, was a focus group to consider the findings of the survey and case study, to anything missing from the findings under this theme, particularly in relation to intersectional women's perspectives and come up with a set of focussed priorities and recommendations for action under Article 14.

4. The case study

4.1 Overview of rural women's issues in the North East of England

The key over-arching issue facing rural women in Northumberland are identified as exclusion created by scarcity of amenities and services – transport, internet, local schools, child and other care, affordable housing, health and mental health services, training and secure work. The cumulative effect makes many opportunities unreachable or unaffordable and drives women and families into poverty and limits their wider opportunities and life chances. This is exacerbated by a largely monocultural landscape where sexism in public and private life remains commonplace. Women with additional characteristics such as older, disabled and BME women face both cultural prejudice and discrimination.¹⁰ Reported hate crime has increased by 400% in the Northumbria Police area since the Brexit referendum.¹¹

In the survey conducted for the North East consultation for shadow CEDAW report respondents were asked: "Do you know about any particular issues for rural women in the North East?" Of the 11 respondents, 100% provided at least 1 key issue, 55% (n=6) provided 2 key issues and 36% (n=4) provided 3 key issues. Issues provided by respondents concerning rural women's issues were categorised and are presented in Figure 1. Issues concerned with: (1) lack of transport and infrastructure; and (2) isolation, loneliness, especially older women/ women with no transport, were the most prevalent mentioned issues in comments. Further issues for rural women included: (3) lack of employment/ educational/ development opportunities; (4) rural poverty; (5) poor broadband connections; and (6) lack of access to services. (See Figure 1).

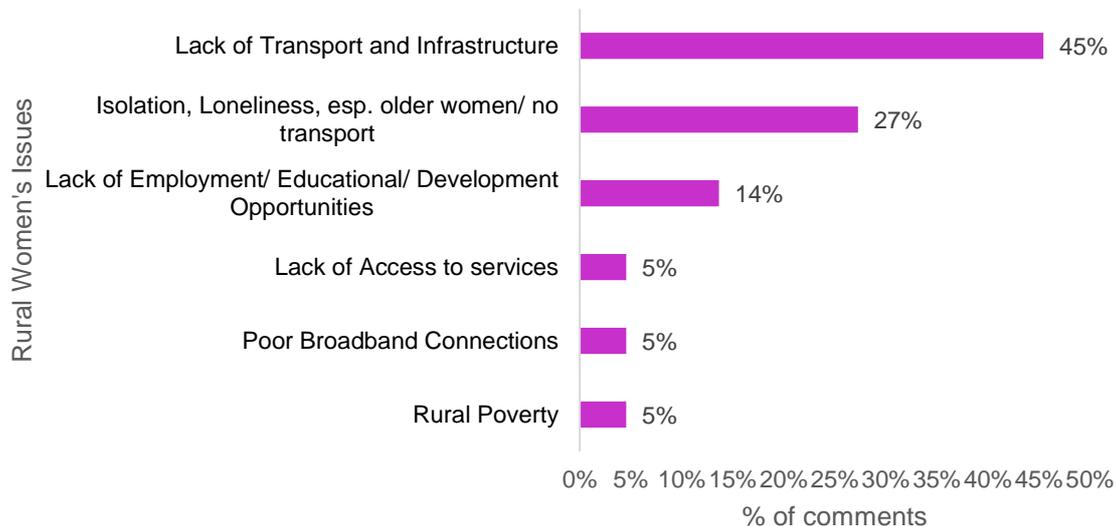


Figure 2: Illustrating the percentage of comments concerning rural women's issues in North East, England.

In County Durham BME people are 'visible' because of their perceived difference, 'race', cultural dress or accent, but invisible in policy documents because of their small numbers in comparison to neighbouring cities and other parts of the country. Little mention is made of County Durham BME population by public sector authorities in their policies and strategies that reflect a good working knowledge, although it is recognised that the BME population is small in numbers and language barriers can play a part in undermining their confidence to access services.^{12 13}

According to a research study in 2012 published by the North East Regional Race Crime and Justice Research Network the 'North East attitude to race are forty years behind the rest of the country and the region is stuck in a time warp'. This can explain the difficulties and subtle barriers to effective engagement with BME individuals and communities.^{14 15}

There is a rural and distant attitude towards BME people in County Durham and BME women are particularly marginalised and isolated in small towns and villages of mostly former mining communities experiencing the economic turndown. Many experience various kinds of barriers, including language, culture, lack of personal transport, poor bus services in rural areas, low income or limited employment opportunities, family and job responsibilities, as well as lack of information about services and difficult access to support networks.¹⁶

Many BME women experienced cultural and social isolation when they first arrived. Many still do because of the lack of opportunities to socialize and this has an effect on their self-esteem and emotional health. In addition, language and cultural differences were often mentioned barriers to meaningful social interactions.

Craig, 2012 p3¹⁷

In 2016 County Durham took part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The families were re-housed in three different localities in County Durham, there has been 4 groups of families since June 2016, and the most recent group arrived in December 2017.^{18 19}

Refugee women are settling down in their localities and have recognized and been grateful about the efforts of the Durham County Council, church organisations, voluntary organisations, Durham City of Sanctuary, Durham university Islamic Society, Durham University Interfaith Forum and Diverse Women's Network as well as many individual volunteers who have made them feel welcome and provided help, support and conversation classes.²⁰

The families have given Durham County Council a 'very positive feedback about the support they have received, saying that they have been made to feel welcome in County Durham'.²¹ However, refugee women are new to County Durham and the UK, they are struggling with expectations and demands they encounter in their new lives. They find themselves in new roles and status in addition to coping with the loss of home, country and loved ones and having to be self-reliant.²²

Article 14(a) to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels

Governmental responses to over-arching issues with the North, including the Northern Powerhouse, are male dominated aggressively urban in nature. It is "City Deals" that underpin devolution come with a commitment to regional directly elected mayors (on 25% are women). Only 1 of the 7 chairs of the established and proposed combined authorities in the Northern Powerhouse region are women and 72% of senior leadership roles are occupied by men.²³

Funding such as the European Leader programme offering funds through a series of Local Action Groups, is being currently dismantled. This is likely to have a disproportionately detrimental impact upon women's participation in the elaboration and implementation of development planning rural areas.²⁴

Article 14(b) to have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning

Women in Northumberland have a 15.2 score for inequality in 'healthy life expectancy' at birth (i.e. maintaining good health into old age), this is higher than all of urban North East areas except Tees Valley.²⁵ As well as many women who have outlived their male partners, the county attracts single women of all ages and backgrounds, with or without children, to enjoy the environment the county offers, and many of these live alone. There is a significantly high older population in rural areas, with an average of 23% over 65, and as high as 40% in some market towns. The impact of retirement pension age eligibility changes has left many women aged 60+ living alone in poverty.²⁶

Women are often dependent on peripatetic mental health crisis services. The lack of local mental health services leave women with waiting lists of months, even where they are suicidal and there are big backlogs of demand for talking therapies and counselling.²⁷

Office for National Statistics (2011), identified that the largest differences between rural and urban areas in people's access to key services were for reaching a hospital and town centre, with both having a 16 percentage point difference.²⁸ This situation has been compounded by austerity and the closure of community hospitals such as the one in Rothbury and other NHS services closures including maternity services in such a Alnwick, Rothbury, Hexham.²⁹ These closures are impacting disproportionately upon women in their roles of mothers and as carers.³⁰

In compiling this case study, a staff member of Durham County Council Human Resources acknowledged that it is difficult to update their data about the BME populations in the county. Historical and current gaps in knowledge and skills by service providers and decision makers as well as their lack of experience and understanding result in dilemmas and a reluctance to address issues and needs of small, diverse and dispersed minority groups. Relatively small numbers of BME residents can sometimes mean that statutory and voluntary sector providers are less mindful

of their needs when commissioning and delivering services than they may be in areas with larger BME populations. Services are also generally ill-equipped to deal with the sometimes complex and multiple needs of BME individuals as well as the cultural differences of an ever changing, dispersed and 'super' diverse population of a county that has little history of cultural diversity and interaction.

Because of their multiple responsibilities and the fact that most of them do not have family members living in the North East or even the UK or many opportunities to develop friendships, BME women in County Durham often suffer from boredom and depression as well as being the sole provider of emotional support for all the family, this can sometimes affect their health and wellbeing. It is especially the case for a good number of BME women whose husbands or partners has been forced to seek employment outside the region and even the UK because of lack of job opportunities nearby.³¹

Many BME women and their families have been the target of racism (abuse, damage to property, bullying at school and discrimination) and as a result have some have suffered from anxiety and in some cases, post-traumatic stress and depression.³² BME women can encounter parallel discrimination when accessing health services.

When dealing with medical professionals, she felt that she was not taken seriously, she felt looked down upon because of ethnicity and the way she was dressed (headscarf and long dress).

Experiences of woman from an Asian background (County Durham)³³

BME women who have experienced domestic abuse are very often reluctant to contact the police for fear of insensitive responses or further abuse and violence. They are also often unaware of available dedicated services have difficulty accessing culturally sensitive support services or BME specialist organisations that are often located in large cities. They often suffer in silence, living in fear, constant anxiety and risk of being ostracized by their own families and communities if they choose to take actions. A small number of the women from International student families who have experienced domestic abuse would not talk about the abuse or engage with external agencies, they often face multiple challenges like BME women UK residents and additional fears: family pressure back home, reluctance to return back to their home country as well as lack of information and support network within reach.³⁴

A number of women who have experienced domestic abuse are often unaware of available services, difficult access culturally sensitive support services or BME specialist organisations that are often located in large cities.³⁵

For Syrian Refugees accessing adequate health care facilities, many have high expectations about services generally and have difficulties understanding how administrative system works. Because of their diversity of ages, abilities, social and cultural backgrounds, experiences and resilience, refugee women encounter varied difficulties and stresses affecting their self-esteem, their health and wellbeing. Other barriers for Syrian Refugees accessing adequate health care facilities Lack of personal transport and a lot of travelling to attend medical needs, and interpreters not always available.³⁶

Article 14(d) to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency

Adult learning brochures regularly advertise a range of vocational and lifelong learning opportunities, but much of it doesn't actually run locally or rurally because of minimum numbers required to render courses viable (i.e. cost-effective for large institutions).³⁷

DC – aged 59, unemployed with mental health and some physical health issues. Having lived abroad D was not initially entitled to benefits, took over a year to get ESA, and so was sent on range of employability training courses over 20 miles away, at Level 1 which is well below her capability.³⁸

Recent SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) reforms were intended to provide a more holistic approach encompassing education and care, but because of the scarcity of services and distances involved, rural women with children with additional needs are not receiving the help they need, and there are increased numbers of home schooled children, with little support for women taking on the role.³⁹

Young women with additional learning needs aged 18 – 25 make up a significant proportion of unemployed young people, with very limited specialist services available to them. Women's Workshop's Young Women's Project is working with generic employability projects to address this gap.⁴⁰

Women's Workshops have evidence from the project users of ongoing exclusion of women who have tried to sign up to courses, who have not been 'allowed' to continue because of their family's or partner's gender stereotypical expectations.⁴¹

Article 14(e) to organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment

Supporting rural women's businesses

160. In 2014, UK Government allocated £1.6 million of funding to projects dedicated to supporting women to overcome the specific problems they face when starting a business in rural areas. This was part of a £15 million package of support given to five Rural Growth Networks (RGN) by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It helped to create more than 3,000 new jobs and 700 businesses.

Many women in work resort to taking several seasonal and low-paid jobs to make ends meet. The seasonal nature of tourism and hospitality industries means disrupted income patterns for women who are in and out of the benefits system, affecting housing benefit as well.⁴²

There are a significantly high number of women setting up micro enterprises in rural areas, cited by Business Northumberland to represent over half of all start-ups, well above the national average. But the business support framework favours high growth and often fails them if they seek to remain small and local.⁴³

An in-depth study of BME women conducted in 2012 found that:

Most working BME women are employed in jobs beneath the equivalent level of qualifications they obtained in their birth countries. A significant number of participants have reported instances where they felt they had been discriminated against by their managers and by employment agencies. Self-employed women have suffered racial abuse and harassment in their workplace.

Craig, 2012 p3⁴⁴

Many Syrian refugee women in County Durham have skills and professional experiences from their countries but cannot seek employment until they reach an adequate level of English proficiency. They lack employment opportunities matching their skills set due to language barriers. Many speak very little English more than often relying on their young children for help. Some can't even read or write in their own language. ⁴⁵

BME women in County Durham are shown to face multiple barriers towards obtaining equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment: ⁴⁶

- Lack of affordable opportunities to improve their English and professional ambitions. ESOL classes in the community by Durham County Council that were available in the past no longer exist because of government budget cuts.
- Many women who have moved to County Durham to find themselves having to juggle priorities on their own with various issues and responsibilities and conflicting priorities and also having to provide emotional support for the whole family with little or no help available, sacrificing their own personal development.
- For young BME women and children, there is a lack of ethnic minority role models in the local communities to inspire them
- Many BME women have experienced difficulties in having qualifications they obtained in their country to be recognized in the UK
- Loss of social status and limited job opportunities for BME women
- Discrimination in seeking employment, experiences of prejudice in the workplace

A Professional stylist was offered part time hours when she was looking for a full-time job at a hairdresser's in a town outside Durham City. She described her experience working there as being very negative, she felt discriminated against and was given demeaning jobs, she felt she was treated like an apprentice or a cleaner. This forced her to look for employment elsewhere. She found a job in Newcastle and said although she has to travel long distances and is incurring more expenses, she now feels more relaxed and has job satisfaction. ⁴⁷

She had experiences of people making assumptions about her saying "Where did you learn to speak English so well?" assuming her not being educated and even "when do plan to go back to your country?" Also, when shopping shops assistants assumed she could not afford buying higher priced items.

She felt discouraged after inquiring about a professional career in health and also in education and in academic pursuits, despite of her qualifications and professional experience. She felt that the advice given “made it seem impossible” for her to envisage having a career in England in those chosen fields. Because of family childcare and family responsibilities.

Experiences of woman from an Asian background (County Durham)⁴⁸

Article 14(f) to participate in all community activities

The rural women’s sector has found itself increasingly at effect of ‘outreach’ approaches adopted by larger third sector organisations and contractors. This ‘hub and spoke’ approach to providing welfare services inevitably means that rural women are not as well-served as their urban counterparts. For example, five urban / regional organisations have plans to carry out ‘outreach’ in rural Northumberland as part of their urban-based services. This means that staff are often based miles away, have to create short focused relationships with women facing challenges, and bring an urban mind-set to their work. More holistic support is left to small, independent women’s organisations, too small to secure contracts in their own right. ⁴⁹

A great number of BME women in County Durham have said they have experienced loneliness, isolation and boredom because of lack of activities and social interaction in their localities and in culturally diverse environments. BME women with disabilities face multiple and additional barriers which contribute to their social exclusion as well as challenges dealing with services and austerity measures. ⁵⁰

Research published in back in 2001, highlighted ‘the most frequently mentioned disadvantage was lack of contact with others from the same cultural background’ (de Lima, 2001:p 49).⁵¹ The research also refers to the inability to access aspects of culture such as food and religious rites. More recently (2012) an in-depth study of BME women found that the majority had experienced social and cultural isolation, despite having lived in a rural town for several years.⁵²

Observing religious practices and attending places of worship was a way to preserve their religious identity and connect with various ‘co-ethnic’ communities.’ The lack of meeting places can affect faith groups particularly. Some organisations used shops, houses and restaurants in order to meet.

Craig, 2012 p4, in Ware (2015)⁵³

Syrian refugee women in County Durham experience varied difficulties and stresses having to adapt in a new environment and culture affecting their self-esteem and expectations. This undermines their ability to integrate in their communities and take full advantage of opportunities that are made available for them. They have experienced social and cultural isolation with very little opportunities for some refugee women to socialize and make new friendships because of education commitments, family responsibilities, hospital and other appointments. Many refugee women struggle with communication and cultural barriers, speaking and learning a new language. Other barriers Syrian refugee women to participate in all community activities are:

- Daily challenges and difficulties to adapt to a new lifestyle and environment with no easy access to other Syrian refugee communities
- Challenges in raising and helping their children in a new and unfamiliar culture

- Difficulties in understanding and accessing services available to them
- Lack of knowledge about services and difficult access to support services. There is on weekly drop-in session in Durham City.

Some Syrian refugee women and their families have been victims of racist incidents. Syrian women wearing headscarves are particularly vulnerable and have been the target of hostile looks and some of aggression.⁵⁴

By far the biggest barrier to participation in all community activities for BME women in County Durham is racial hatred and hate crime. BME women in are particularly vulnerable in County Durham as most live in small town, scattered across the county, a vast geographical area, the climate of austerity, intolerance and hostility towards ethnic minorities perceived by people in the ethnic majority as ‘foreigners’ is increasing. Extreme, far right organisations are gaining public attention and support, with slogans that are fanning the flames of prejudice, bigotry, hate, and division across the UK, County Durham is susceptible to such divisive ideas.⁵⁵

In an in-depth study conducted with BME women in a rural town in Durham, many respondents’ initial impressions of the town were of a quiet place where their children could grow.⁵⁶ However:

Soon after settling, a good number of women experienced racial abuse and harassment. A majority of women talked about their experiences of racial abuse and harassment; some have been repeat victims. Many have mentioned young people being the main perpetrators. The women expressed their feeling of disappointment with the police as they expected more support and action after reporting racist incidents. A number of participants have mentioned that they would not let their children play outside in the neighbourhood as they fear for their safety.

Craig, 2012:p3

The issue of ‘normalised’ hatemongering, hate speech and proxy targeted hate demonstrations by right wing organisations with track records against people with ‘protected characteristics’ as identified in The Equality Act 2010 is one of our concerns. Decisions to allow targeted public hate demonstrations appear to be made without reference, record or understanding of the concept of “due regard”, an important element of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act. Such ‘hate demonstrations’ were identified, along with other factors, to stirring up and contributing to the speedy radicalisation of Darren Osborne who committed the Finsbury Park Mosque attack and cause us to consider potential impact of such demonstrations and banner slogans as we have witnessed in the North East by groups such as ‘Bishop Auckland Against Islam’ and ‘North East Infidels’, and their recent joint march through Durham City targeting ‘Syrian Refugees’ especially in times of ‘spikes’ and in the isolation of rural areas places a large percentage of our membership at risk if individuals or small groups of individuals perceive them as ‘refugees’. To some, refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and so on, all mean ‘foreigner’, in a region where xenophobia and nostalgia for a bygone age are challenged by change, diversity, pluralism and ‘free movement of people’. The feeling is that that ‘Hate Speech’ is not ‘Free Speech’ and ‘Hate Mongering’ banners are an abuse of ‘Freedom of expression’ and that decision makers who do not apply the full requirement of “due regard” are making illegal decisions.⁵⁷

With the rise in number of followers and supporters of Far-Right organisations globally and in the North East and following the demonstration on 24th November 2017 in Durham City by Bishop

Auckland Against Racism and the North East Infidels protesting against the council's housing policy towards Syrian refugees, BME women, some children and international students are feeling increasingly vulnerable. A hate crime can be around the corner or in any classroom. The tabloid culture, increase of racist posts and tweets on social media as well as tolerance of hate speech put many women at risk especially refugee women or anyone perceived as Syrian refugee.⁵⁸

When walking in shopping centre of a small town someone told her "go back to your country". She felt discriminated against because of her family name when she appealed up to 4 times for a place for her sons at local primary school only 40 feet away from her house. Her children have been bullied by classmates at school and had been made aware on numerous occasions of their skin colour. One of her sons has been called 'brown'. She said her children have heard the word 'Paki' so many times that they don't feel offended anymore.

Experiences of woman from an Asian background (County Durham)⁵⁹

Racial hatred and hate crime⁶⁰

Many women and their families have been the target of hate incidents very often committed by young white male perpetrators; they have experienced abuse either in their neighbourhood, their workplace, when shopping, at the bus stop, when using public transport, walking in the street and at times in the presence of their children. Their properties have been damaged and trashed, some have been assaulted all because of their perceived 'race' religion, accent or clothing. These experiences increase when incidents and biased media coverage produce a spike. Their children and especially teenagers have experienced bullying and online jokes by school friends according to a snapshot survey conducted by the Diverse Women's Network in May and June 2017 (a year on after the Brexit campaign and in the middle of the attacks in Manchester and London Bridge) interviewing 56 women and 26.8 % of them reported that they have experienced intense staring, hateful looks, shouting and verbal abuse, direct discrimination, damage to property, cyber racist bullying and in some instance physical assault. They have experienced hostility and feelings of being unwelcomed. Most incidents go often under-reported because of stressful procedures and fear of backlash and lack of trust that the police and other agencies will deal with racist incidents effectively.

BME women and BME children and teenager girls experienced backlash following news coverage of those events. They have suffered from anxiety and even in one case from post-traumatic stress.

The other 73.2% have said that they have not experienced any form of racism, some have admitted that they use their own transport, they do not wear clothing that will identify them as belonging to a particular nationality or religion, they do not live in disadvantaged areas and a good number of them live in Durham City and feel safe and part of the cultural diversity of the City.

In order to cope with negative and relentless reports of terrorist attacks from the media, tabloid newspapers and from spikes of racist abuse and attacks, some (mostly Muslim women and girls wearing headscarves) have chosen to limit their outings as they feel extremely vulnerable, experiencing stresses within the family and increasing feelings of isolation and alienation.

With the rise in number of followers and supporters of Far-Right organisations globally and in the North East and following the demonstration on 24th November 2017 in Durham City by

Bishop Auckland Against Racism and the North East Infidels protesting against the council's housing policy towards Syrian refugees, BME women, some children and international students are feeling increasingly vulnerable. A hate crime can be around the corner or in any classroom. The tabloid culture, increase of racist posts and tweets on social media as well as tolerance of hate speech put many women at risk especially refugee women or anyone perceived as Syrian refugee.

BME women in are particularly vulnerable in County Durham as most live in small town, scattered across the county, a vast geographical area where they feel isolated in a climate of austerity. Intolerance and hostility towards ethnic minorities perceived by people in the ethnic majority as 'foreigners' is increasing. Extreme, far right organisations are gaining public attention and support, with slogans that are fanning the flames of prejudice, bigotry, hate, and division across the UK, County Durham is susceptible to such divisive ideas.

Article 14(h) to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Improving access to Broadband

161. In 2014, UK Government established the Women and Broadband Challenge Fund and committed £1million to help women grow their business online. This fund gave women the practical help needed to get their businesses on-line and take advantage of superfast broadband. The fund was part of the Government's Superfast Broadband rollout and was aimed to help women take full advantage of all the opportunities superfast broadband can bring to business. Scotland's Digital Future: Infrastructure Action Plan outlines Scotland's commitment to a world-class, future-proofed infrastructure that will deliver digital connectivity across the whole of Scotland by 2020. So far, over £240 million of public sector funding has been committed to taking forward the Infrastructure Action plan.

Housing

While house-building has increased dramatically, much of it still doesn't meet the needs of local women. Either it is unaffordable, or not social housing, or the expansion of tourism and demand for second homes keeps prices artificially high in some areas of the county. There are many country estate landowners, so a significant number of rural women remain in this private rented sector, where repairs and upkeep are limited.⁶¹

Government responses to housing issues focus on the very real urban issues of over-pricing and supply, and less fully addressing second home syndrome or green land sites challenges, and the very specific style of the private rented market in rural areas. There is also an emphasis on affordability for buying homes which is not relevant to women in poverty.⁶²

Taking women's needs into account when providing rural transport

163. UK Government is keen to promote a range of transport solutions in rural communities, not just rural buses. These include "Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Buses" and Community Transport Services such as "Dial-a-Ride". The British Government gives local authorities the freedom to make the right decisions for their own communities and to assist Local Highways Authorities to produce their Local Transport Plans. In 2009 guidance was produced which placed a strong emphasis on better connecting transport and local services. In 2014, the Government launched a £25 million Community Minibus Fund, which has since provided over 380 minibuses to community groups across England. UK Government is committed to maintaining an England-wide travel concession for older and disabled people who can travel for free at off peak times when using buses locally and when visiting other parts of the country. This supports the Government's wider work to tackle social exclusion. Bus travel remains the most used form of public transport, especially by older people.

Women without available personal transport can spend hours, often with small children, catching and riding in buses around the county. It costs over £6 for a return ticket to a market town for a woman living in a village setting, and there are no universal subsidies for local people. School transport is not subsidised for families living within 3 miles of the educational establishment. For those with cars, petrol is significantly more expensive at the pump. The cost to the women's sector in providing holistic support to women is high, with round trips often costing an average of £40.⁶³

Travel to work strategies do not properly address the shape of work in rural areas, and even efforts to link market towns to urban work opportunities are sparse, for example, hourly buses taking an hour and a half between Alnwick and Newcastle.⁶⁴

Services scattered in a vast geographical area in County Durham with difficult access because of lack of personal transport and discontinued bus services, having to use two or three buses to travel to their destination. Low income families can't afford travel expenses.⁶⁵

References and notes

- ¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>
- ² CEDAW/C/GBR/8 - Eighth periodic report submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2017* [Date received: 16 November 2017]
- ³ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Northumberland-Knowledge-and-JSNA/Our-People/Older-People.aspx>
- ⁴ see p6 of https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/Document%20library/ImpactOfMigrantWorkersInNorthumberland_Feb2009.pdf
- ⁵ <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/race-hate-crime-north-east-12610616>
- ⁶ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/NK%20place/Ward%20factsheets/FactSheetWardMay2013BerwickEast.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1946157058>
- ⁸ Hate Crime, Ref CS011. Data sources: Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU), An Overview of Hate Crime in England and Wales: Home Office, ONS and Ministry of Justice (Dec 2012), Action Against Hate: The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime (July 2016), Office for National Statistics (ONS), Durham Constabulary, Performance Report –Quarter 4 -12 months to 31stMarch 2017
- ⁹ <http://womensworkshop.net/>
- ¹⁰ Evidence collated by Co-ordinator of Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ¹¹ Police figures obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/racist-hate-crimes-surge-to-record-high-after-brexit-vote-new-figures-reveal-a7829551.html>
- ¹² Durham County Council (2017) 'Meeting the Public-Sector Equality Duty'
- ¹³ Durham County Council (2016) 'County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019 Delivery Plan
- ¹⁴ Northern Echo (2012)
http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/9756794.North_s_attitude_to_race_stuck_in_a_time_warp/
- ¹⁵ Craig G., O'Neill M., Cole B., Antonopoulos G., Devanney C., Adamson S. (2012) 'Race', crime and justice in the North East Region
- ¹⁶ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ¹⁷ Craig G. (2012) 'A place called Townsville. Rural racism in a North East Context' Durham University School of Applied Social Studies Durham
- ¹⁸ Derrache Thompson I. (2017) Experiences of BME women in County Durham, Snapshot survey of racist incidents from the Brexit campaign to the Manchester and London attacks (PowerPoint Presentation)
- ¹⁹ <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/7045/Supporting-refugees-in-County-Durham>
- ²⁰ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ²¹ Durham county Council (2017) 'Humanitarian Support in County Durham, An Evaluation'
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/17479/Humanitarian-support-in-County-Durham>
- ²² Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ²³ The Fawcett Society, LGiU (June 2016) The Northern Powerhouse: an analysis of women's representation. Polly Trenow and Jemima Olchawski
- ²⁴ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ²⁵ State of Northumberland - Health & Well Being -
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PjdGfy4yv6ClSJA6Q8PFQ3Sx9BJnzCHJ3rePC0oKktE/edit#gid=1880492237>
- ²⁶ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ²⁷ State of Northumberland - Health & Well Being -
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PjdGfy4yv6ClSJA6Q8PFQ3Sx9BJnzCHJ3rePC0oKktE/edit#gid=1880492237>
- ²⁸ Anna Donabie (2011) Office for National Statistics 24 Social Trends: Transport ST41
- ²⁹ NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (the CCG) considered the future arrangements at Rothbury Community Hospital at a meeting held in public on Wednesday 27 September 2017. The CCG's Joint Locality Executive Board decided that the 12 inpatient beds at Rothbury Community Hospital should be permanently closed and that existing health and care services should be shaped around a Health and Wellbeing Centre on the site.
<http://www.northumberlandccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/rchconsultation/>
- ³⁰ Katie Dickinson, Chronical Live (23.11.2016), Northumberland hospital changes are 'starving rural areas of services', union claims <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/health/northumberland-hospital-changes-starving-rural-12215997>
- ³¹ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ³² Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ³³ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ³⁴ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ³⁵ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ³⁶ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ³⁷ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ³⁸ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)

-
- ³⁹ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴⁰ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴¹ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴² Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴³ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴⁴ Craig G. (2012) 'A place called Townsville. Rural racism in a North East Context' Durham University School of Applied Social Studies Durham
- ⁴⁵ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁴⁶ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁴⁷ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁴⁸ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁴⁹ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁵⁰ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁵¹ de Lima J.F. (2001) 'Needs not Numbers' Commission for Racial Equality/Community Development Foundation, London.
- ⁵² Craig G. (2012) 'A place called Townsville. Rural racism in a North East Context' Durham University School of Applied Social Studies Durham
- ⁵³ Paul Ware (June 2015) 'Black People don't drink tea...' The experience of Rural Black and Minority Ethnic Community Groups in England, Third Sector Research Centre, Working Paper 130
- ⁵⁴ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁵⁵ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁵⁶ Craig G. (2012) 'A place called Townsville. Rural racism in a North East Context' Durham University School of Applied Social Studies Durham
- ⁵⁷ The Equality Act 2010, Section 149, Public Sector Equality Duty, "If a decision is reached without due regard to the PSED, then it is an unlawful decision and, subject to any overwhelming discretionary features, the decision should be quashed" Bob Hepple 2014 'Equality the Legal Framework' p172 95 Bracking v Secretary of State for Work and pensions [2014] EqLR 60, para 69
- ⁵⁸ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁵⁹ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)
- ⁶⁰ A snapshot survey conducted by the Diverse Women's Network in May and June 2017 (a year on after the Brexit campaign and the attacks in Manchester and London Bridge) interviewing 56 women
- ⁶¹ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁶² Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁶³ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁶⁴ Evidence collated by Fourth Action Women's Workshop (March 2018)
- ⁶⁵ Evidence collated by Diverse Women's Network (March 2018)