BAME staff experiences of academic and research libraries

Dr Mohammed Ishaq
School of Business and Enterprise, University of the West of Scotland

and

Dr Asifa Maaria Hussain
School of Social Sciences, Heriot-Watt University

SCONUL

Acknowledgments

The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors, the participants of the focus group and interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of SCONUL members.

Contact the author: Dr M Ishaq
School of Business and Enterprise
University of the West of Scotland

mohammed.ishaq@uws.ac.uk

Contents

SCONUL

List of figures

List of tables

1 Introduction from the SCONUL Chair

We wanted to put the voices of BAME staff at the centre of our conversation about the lack of ethnic diversity in our workforce, and that is what this report aims to do. SCONUL designed and commissioned this research in order to help those of us who are privileged enough to lead our libraries to understand the lived experience of our staff from a BAME background. We need to listen to what they have to say. Some of the things they report may run counter to what we hope for and expect, but it is important to ground any change programme in the fundamental reality of their experiences.

We know we have a problem. The fact that we share with our institutions and with our profession a notable lack of diversity does not in any way negate our own individual and collective responsibility for bringing about change. The SCONUL Board has committed to work on fostering diversity over the long term, and to demonstrate leadership through our own actions. We have chosen not to end this report with a series of quick recommendations which, if implemented, might give us the opportunity to say we are taking action, but which may not lead to the kind of fundamental changes we and our colleagues need to see. Instead, we have identified a set of areas in which we need to work and these are discussed in more detail in my colleague Caroline Taylor's concluding commentary.

We welcome discussion of those proposals from our members including from BAME colleagues and from our partners across the broader library community and beyond. We want to learn from institutions and individuals across public and private sector bodies who have been successful in making the kinds of changes we want to see, and we want to measure the impact of what we're doing both in terms of creating a workforce that better reflects the population it serves but also one in which our BAME staff feel that they are valued and can flourish.

Pete Ryan, Chair of SCONUL
Director of Library and Learning Resources at Canterbury Christ Church University

2 Executive summary

This research was commissioned by SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) and was aimed at documenting the lived experience of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff working in academic and research libraries across the UK. The research deployed an essentially qualitative approach involving a focus group and one-to-one in-depth interviews with BAME staff.

2.1 Key findings

The following findings of significance emerged from the survey conducted prior to the qualitative phase and were later reinforced by the perceptions and views collated from the focus group and one-to-one interviews:

1. 44% of BAME staff surveyed had experienced racism at the hands of either a work colleague or service user or both;

2. 65% of those who had experienced racism had reported it;

3. 80% of those who had reported racism said it had not been resolved to their satisfaction;

4. just over half of respondents (53%) felt that their workplace valued equality and diversity and had an inclusive culture.

The following findings emerged from the qualitative element of the research.

1. BAME staff feel under pressure to perform to a higher standard than their white counterparts and feel that they are being monitored. This was especially the view among those who believed their ethnicity particularly stood out.

2. Some BAME staff were conscious that they belonged to a minority ethnic group and this added to their sense of being monitored whilst undertaking their workplace duties.

3. The need for greater ethnic diversity of the library workforce was a strong sentiment expressed by BAME staff.

4. There was a view that lack of diversity in the library profession was not being acknowledged, nor taken seriously, by the senior management of academic and research libraries.

5. Participants noted that senior roles in the library profession are dominated by white individuals. Institutional barriers were identified as a hindrance to the progression of BAME staff to the upper levels of library hierarchies. BAME staff were perceived as experiencing a glass ceiling.

6. Training and development opportunities were generally perceived to be adequate but there were fewer opportunities for those staff classed as non-professional (e.g. library assistants) than for professional staff with a library qualification (e.g. librarians). This had a greater adverse impact on BAME staff than white staff, as BAME staff were perceived as being over represented at the lower end of the job ladder.

7. Lack of funding was viewed as a threat to further training and development opportunities: i.e. training and development opportunities beyond those required to fulfil the role were limited. Although this was acknowledged as not unique to BAME staff, there was concern that BAME staff would be disproportionately affected as they were most in need of such opportunities in order to advance.

8. Whilst most BAME staff were aware of promotion opportunities that arose, they felt these were limited. Though this was not unique to BAME staff, the concern was that they would be more adversely affected as, in a competitive situation, and where vacancies were limited, it was perceived that the vacancy was more likely to go to a white colleague.

9. There was acknowledgement of initiatives that both institutions and their libraries had put in place to advance equality and diversity but these were seen as not going far enough and viewed by some as token gestures or publicity stunts.

10. Financial constraints are viewed by participants as having a detrimental impact on advancing the equality and diversity agenda in academic and research libraries.

11. Whilst workplace racism was not viewed as rampant, it did exist: some at the hands of service users, for example students, and some at the hands of staff. The experience of racism at the hands of staff centred primarily on the issue of inappropriate language and ignorance about cultural issues and fell within the realm of racial micro-aggression.

12. Complaints about racism were not dealt with adequately and there was a sense that management and the human resources function lacked the willpower to address the issue. Overall there was perceived to be a lack of institutional will to address racism.

13. There was concern that trade unions were no longer doing enough to promote equality and diversity. This generated a feeling that BAME staff were unprotected and lacked adequate workplace representation and voice.

14. Although relationships with line managers were viewed as satisfactory in terms of day to day-to-day activities, BAME staff felt that they were not encouraged to climb the ladder and were left having to carve out their own career pathway. Consequently, libraries were not seen as developing the talent of BAME staff and were not exploiting the BAME talent pipeline.

15. Effective work–life balance was generally seen as achievable and there was little or no perception that BAME staff were disadvantaged in this respect.

16. Despite the workplace challenges acknowledged by BAME staff, this would not prevent them from recommending the library profession to anyone from the BAME community considering a career in the sector.

SCONUL

17. BAME staff had suggestions for those in charge of libraries as to what they should do to further advance the equality and diversity (E & D) agenda and what they would perceive as evidence that the library sector was making progress: 'make it [E & D] a strategic priority'; 'educate themselves given that most are white'; 'create more opportunities for BAME staff to progress'; 'seek HR advice to promote equality and diversity'; 'monitor workforce diversity to provide an evidence base'; 'consider a BAME mentorship programme'.

SCONUL

3 Introduction

3.1 Background and research context

The increasing diversity of the UK and the global movement of people are reflected on the campuses of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the presence of students from diverse ethnic, racial, national and religious backgrounds. The same cannot be said of staff diversity across various job categories; research conducted by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) (2017) showing staff representation from BAME backgrounds in both academic and professional and support roles lagging considerably behind those classed as white. The research found that, in 2015–16, of UK university academic staff, 85.5% are white while 14.6% are from a BAME background. Among senior academic staff, the percentage from a BAME background drops to 2.9%. For full-time professional and support staff, 90.9% are white and 9.1% are BAME, while for senior professional and support staff the percentage from a BAME background drops to 5.9%.

The situation is similar when it comes to the library profession, where a marked lack of diversity is very noticeable, as evidenced by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Archives and Records Association (ARA) (Ireland and UK) in 2015 (see CILIP and ARA, 2015). This showed that of the estimated 86,000+ professionals working in the library and information profession across public, academic and commercial libraries, 96.7% identify as white.

SCONUL does not collect data on the ethnic make-up of the academic library workforce, and previous research aiming to capture the experience of BAME staff working in the UK's public sector is limited (see Equality Challenge Unit, 2011 and 2017; Chand, 2018). In relation to the library profession such studies are non-existent. Furthermore, SCONUL has commissioned this research into the experience of BAME staff working in the UK's academic and research libraries as part of a wider project looking at a range of aspects that relate to human resources issues and

SCONUL

workforce development in the sector. Together, these concerns provide a strong rationale for undertaking this research.

3.2 Research aim

In relation to the wider project referred to above, this part of the project focuses on diversity and how it should be fostered. More specifically, the overarching aim of the research was to explore the lived experiences of BAME staff working in academic and research libraries in order to support the broader agenda and work on diversity. The research represents a pertinent opportunity to explore this and related diversity issues. It is hoped that the results of the study will generate an evidence base that contributes to the process of informing future research, policy and practice in relation to fostering ethnic diversity within academic and research libraries and moving the wider equality and diversity agenda forward.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research approach and design

The methodological approach was essentially qualitative in nature as the aim of the research was to gauge the experiences of BAME staff working in academic and research libraries. A quantitative approach was not deemed appropriate in capturing the lived experiences of BAME staff. However, it was agreed prior to the commencement of the research that a survey be undertaken to gather some initial demographic data that would provide some evidence of the profile of BAME staff currently working in academic and research libraries, whilst acknowledging that the absence of a baseline meant that the interpretation of the survey findings had to be treated with caution. As noted earlier, SCONUL does not monitor the ethnicity of the academic library workforce.

The survey was initially pilot-tested, and based on the outcome of the pilot, a couple of amendments were made to the wording of questions and to the choice of options offered (see Appendix 1). The survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey with the help of SCONUL, who promoted it via various channels including internal staff email lists and their website in order to maximise the response rate. It was administered in September 2018 and constituted phase one of the data collection process. The survey also provided an opportunity to ask respondents if they were willing to take part in phase two of the data collection process, the qualitative phase of the research.

Those who indicated their desire to take part in phase two, which involved a focus group and one-to-one interviews, were contacted to arrange participation. When selecting focus group participants and interviewees, consideration was given to characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion / beliefs and mode of employment in order to ensure that the sample for both the focus group and the series of interviews was representative of those who had completed the survey. In total nine participants took part in the focus group, which lasted around two and a half hours, and 16 in-depth interviews were conducted in December 2018 by phone from the premises of

SCONUL

the researchers, for reasons of convenience and cost effectiveness. The duration of each interview varied from 35 to 55 minutes.

The University of Birmingham hosted the focus group in November 2018 and served as an ideal venue given the geographical proximity of participants. The themes were agreed between the researchers and the project team (see Appendix 3). Emerging themes from the analysis of the focus group helped inform the creation of an interview schedule that served as the basis for the series of one-to-one interviews with BAME staff (see Appendix 4).

4.2 Research ethics

Ethical approval was obtained for all stages of the data collection process. For the survey this was arranged by SCONUL as the survey was administered through its channels, whilst for the focus group and interviews it was secured through the principal researcher's institution, the University of the West of Scotland (UWS).

The UWS ethical approval process takes full cognisance of issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, data protection and consent. Part of this process involves providing would-be participants with a participant information sheet (see Appendix 5) and consent form (see Appendix 6). The information sheet sets out the purpose of the research, including the study's aim and objectives, and emphasises the voluntary nature of the research and the option to withdraw participation at any time. It also sets out the level and nature of involvement required on the part of participants (e.g. to complete a survey or take part in a focus group or interview), why they have been invited to take part, and confirmation that participants will not be exposed to any physical, psychological or legal risk or harm. The information sheet also explains to would-be participants what will happen to data that is collected, how it will be managed including how it will be stored, protected, used and disposed of.

Once participants had indicated their willingness to participate in the focus group, they were asked to sign a consent form confirming their consent to participate and to

be video recorded. The forms were collected by the researchers before commencing the focus group. In the case of interviewees, they were sent the information sheet and consent form via email prior to undertaking the interview and, once they had confirmed their willingness to take part and be audio recorded, they were asked to sign and return the consent form via email.

Both focus group participants and interviewees were assured that every care would be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and that data collected would be managed in such a way as to ensure that the data and participants' identity would not be disclosed to any unauthorised party. The data collected from the focus group and interviewees was transcribed using software by a transcriber who signed a data processing agreement with the university.

In terms of ethics and data management, all data collected and captured was stored securely on a memory stick and password protected PC and outwith the reach of any unauthorised party; files were password protected to guard against unauthorised access. UWS is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office, which implements the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. All personal data of participants has been processed in accordance with the provisions of this legislation. On completion of the research, all data will be handed over to SCONUL via email using a secure server, as indicated in the research brief.

SCONUL

5 Findings

In this section of the report, the findings of the research are reported. This includes the results from phase one (the survey) followed by the findings from the core phase of the research (the focus group and in-depth interviews). These are reported under the key themes explored in the research.

5.1 Findings from survey

As stated above, those identifying themselves as BAME staff were invited to complete a survey. As this generated demographic data and was conducted against a backdrop of no ethnic monitoring of the workforce by SCONUL, the absence of a baseline meant that the researchers confined their analysis to simple descriptive analysis of the data. In total, 273 BAME staff working in academic and research libraries completed the survey. Based on this sample and some analysis of the demographic profile of BAME staff, we can establish that the sample was reasonably representative of various demographic characteristics such as gender, age-group, geographical region, tenure of employment, work mode, job role, ethnicity and religion. Whilst reiterating that the survey was essentially a demographic exercise, the opportunity was, however, taken to collect some useful data that would be of specific relevance to the research aim and could be explored further in the focus group and in-depth interviews. This applies to questions 10 to 12 of the survey (see Appendix 1).

Given that the survey was not the focal point of this research, an analysis of the results is confined to a brief summary of the key highlights from the survey reported below. All percentages reported in the survey results have been rounded up to the nearest decimal point.

Illustrations or visual representations of the survey results in the form of figures can be found in Appendix 2. These can be viewed in conjunction with the summary of the survey findings below where reference is made to these illustrations.

SCONUL

The key findings from the survey can be summarised as follows:

- More than two thirds of those who completed the survey were female (69.2%) and just over a quarter (26.7%) male. Around 4% identified themselves as 'other', including non-binary (see Figure 1);

- Around 80% of respondents were within the age-groups 26–35, 36–45, and 46–55. Overall though, all age-groups had some representation in the survey (see Figure 2).

- There was representation from across the UK, with Greater London predominating (57.7%), followed by the North West / North East / Yorkshire and the Humber (16.9%), South West / South East (excluding Greater London) (13.1%) and East / West Midlands (8.99%). Representation from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland was very small (see Figure 3).

- In terms of how long respondents had worked for their current employer (Figure 4), the survey attracted participation from both those with considerable service – more than a third (37.1%) having accumulated more than 10 years of service – and those who had only been with their current employer for between one and 5 years (35.2%).

- In terms of contract status (Figure 5) the overwhelming majority (85%) were on a permanent contract; much smaller numbers of participants were on a fixed-term contract (12.7%) or a zero-hours /casual contract (2.2%).

- The mode of employment of respondents (Figure 6) reveals that the vast majority were full time (75.7%) and just over a fifth part time (21.7%).

- The survey attracted participation from both those whose job role was classed as 'professional', i.e. those with a library qualification or equivalent (52%), and 'non-professional', i.e. those without a library qualification (41.6%). A small percentage (6.7%) identified their job role as 'other' (See Figure 7).

- When respondents were asked to indicate their ethnicity, just over a third (35.7%) chose Asian / Asian British, and just under a quarter opted for Black / Black British /

Black African / Black Caribbean (23.1%) and Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group (23.5%). A further 17.6% identified themselves as 'other ethnic groups' (Figure 8).

- Christianity was the largest religion represented in the survey (32.1%) followed by 30.6% who selected 'no religion'. Other religions synonymous with the UK's ethnic minorities, including those categories identified in the 2011 Census, were also represented in the survey as shown in Figure 9.

- More than half of respondents had applied for promotion (55.7%) as illustrated in Figure 10 and a similar number had been successful (55.4%) (Figure 11). However, what we cannot deduce from these findings is the number of times respondents had applied for promotion, the level or type of promotion they had achieved and their overall experience of the promotion process. Some sense of the views on and experience of promotion were extracted from the focus group and interview findings revealed in the next section of the report.

- Figure 12 illustrates that around 44% of respondents had experienced racial discrimination at work either from a service user, work colleague or both. However, as seen in Figure 13, only around a third (35.2%) had decided to report it.

- Figure 14 shows that almost 80% of those who had reported having experienced racial discrimination in the workplace did not feel it had been resolved to their satisfaction. As with the theme of promotion, the focus group and interview findings provide more insights into the experience of workplace discrimination, including the source and nature of the discrimination.

- Just over half of respondents (53.7%) either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that their workplace values equality and diversity and has an inclusive culture. This is despite the fact that 80% of those who had reported racial discrimination did not feel that it had been resolved satisfactorily. Perhaps what is more interesting, as seen in Figure 15, is that around a fifth of respondents were undecided and indicated 'neither agree nor disagree / don't know'.

- In relation to the demographic information revealed by the survey results, this is generally reflective of what was revealed by the study of the UK information workforce conducted by CILIP and ARA (2015). This study revealed the following, which resonates with the findings from the survey in this research:

  o Most members of the information workforce are located in London;

  o There is a high proportion of female workers in the information sector;

  o There is greater representation of employees in the age-groups 36-45 and 46-55 in the sector; and

  o Christianity and 'no religion' represent the religious affiliation of the majority of employees in the sector.

5.2 Findings from focus group and interviews

A thematic approach was applied to the analysis of the focus group and one-to-one interviews. Common themes that emerged from the analysis of both the focus group and the interviews are reported in this section. In order to preserve anonymity, when presenting quotations, focus group participants have been assigned a number to distinguish between them (e.g. Focus group participant 1) whilst those who took part in the series of interviews have been assigned a letter (e.g. Interviewee A).

Demographic information relating to those who took part in the focus group and interviews is provided in Table 1 and Table 2 below. This information was extracted from the survey that was completed by the focus group participants and interviewees.

SCONUL

Table 1: Demographic profile of focus group participants

Participant No.	Gender	Age-group	Job role	Ethnicity	Religion	Time in current employment
1	Female	26–35	Other	Asian / Asian British	Muslim	1–5 years
2	Female	56–65	Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	More than 10 years
3	Female	46–55	Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	1–5 years
4	Female	36–45	Non-Professional	Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group	Christian	Less than 1 year
5	Male	26–35	Professional	Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group	Christian	1–5 years
6	Male	36–45	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Muslim	More than 10 years
7	Female	36–45	Professional	Asian/ Asian British	Muslim	1–5 years
8	Male	26–35	Non-Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	6–10 years
9	Female	36–45	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Prefer not to say	More than 10 years

SCONUL

Table 2: Demographic profile of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age-group	Job role	Ethnicity	Religion	Time in current employment
A	Male	36–45	Professional	Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	Buddhist	1–5 years
B	Female	36–45	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Muslim	More than 10 years
C	Female	26–35	Professional	Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	No religion	1–5 years
D	Female	36–45	Professional	Asian / Asian British	No religion	No religion
E	Female	36–45	Non-Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	1–5 years
F	Female	56–65	Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	1–5 years
G	Female	46–55	Non-professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	Christian	More than 10 years
H	Female	46–55	Professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	No religion	1–5 years
I	Female	36–45	Professional	Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	Other	6–10 years
J	Male	26–35	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Muslim	1–5 years
K	Female	26–35	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Hindu	Less than 1 year
L	Male	36–45	Professional	Asian / Asian British	Hindu	More than 10 years
M	Male	36–45	Professional	Other	Muslim	More than 10 years
N	Female	46–55	Professional	Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	No religion	Less than 1 year
O	Female	26–35	Non-professional	Mixed / Multiple ethnic group	No religion	1–5 years
P	Male	26–35	Non-professional	Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean	No religion	Less than 1 year

SCONUL

5.2.1 Awareness of being a BAME member of staff and feeling of being monitored

BAME staff feel under pressure to perform to a higher standard than their white counterparts. This was particularly the view of those BAME staff whose ethnicity was especially visible and who were conscious and very self-aware of this. Part of this self-awareness was connected to a sense that they belonged to a workforce where there was little ethnic diversity and this perpetuated their consciousness of being a BAME staff member. This highlights a feeling among BAME staff that lack of ethnic diversity in the library profession was an issue:

> *I think sometimes people are quite surprised when I start talking and I have got a very British accent and it does not match the way I look.* (Interviewee D)

> *I think it kind of puts a lot of pressure on you if there's very few ethnic minorities represented in the staff because you feel that maybe it's coming from me because I'm a perfectionist but I feel that I have to try that bit harder because I feel that not only am I representing myself as a member of staff and doing things to the best of my ability, I'm also in some way representing how white people are gonna see every [reference to participant's nationality] person from hereon in because they might not see another [reference to participant's nationality] person for a very long time. So you do feel that extra, you know, pressure of representing not just your profession but your race as well.* (Focus group participant 4)

> *It's just sometimes you feel that you don't have the face that fits.* (Interviewee J)

Almost half of interviewees and a number of focus group participants felt closely monitored at work because of their ethnicity. Some felt that they were targeted because they had spoken up about equality and diversity issues:

… because I talk a lot about being BAME quite a lot and issues in librarianship and ask questions about it, I think that everything that I do is closely monitored … I was asked to speak on a panel by the SU about the BAME experience in higher education and the Deputy Director of the library just turned up and sat in the front row and watched me speak and when I finished she left.…I'm definitely being watched in what I say. (Interviewee C)

… as a BAME member of staff, I tend to keep myself to myself because I don't trust them fundamentally… So they may have views of the fact that I keep myself to myself. (Interviewee H)

… when I talk with a couple of my colleagues, and one of them who's been giving me really superb off the record mentoring, like really has helped me … I've really benefited from that kind of advice … every time she and I would have a meet by our desks or around the library, one of the heads of service would go past with eyes like this [makes staring gesture]. Like, 'oh the brown people are talking. I wonder what they're plotting' and that kind of reverberated attitude because I'd come back in … It made me feel watched. It made me feel like someone's observing you, someone's expecting me to plot something horrific. (Focus group participant 7)

A number of others could not be certain that they were not being monitored:

I don't know if we are more closely monitored but I definitely feel that I have to get recognition. I feel that I have had to work harder than my white colleagues. (Interviewee K)

Those who did not directly feel that they were being monitored did however witness other colleagues from a BAME background being more closely watched:

SCONUL

I saw on a number of occasions a colleague of mine who was from [name of country] just be treated terribly. It was just appalling, just people openly would comment on how she spoke and correct her pronunciation and watch everything she did. (Interviewee N)

… I've seen black colleagues for example be treated in a way that I think, okay I wouldn't have experienced that. (Interviewee O)

5.2.2 Experience of workplace racism

The analysis of the survey results reported in section 3.1 revealed:

- 44% had experienced racism at the hands of either a work colleague or service user or both;

- 65% of those who had experienced racism had reported it; and

- 80% of those who had reported it said it had not been resolved to their satisfaction.

These results suggested that further investigation was required in the qualitative phase through exploration of participants' views. The focus group and series of interviews revealed that whilst workplace racism was not viewed as rampant it did exist and had been experienced by some BAME staff. For some, the experience of racism had been at the hands of service users, for example students, and for others it had come from work colleagues. The experience of racism centred primarily on the issue of inappropriate language and ignorance about cultural issues in the workplace, including what would be classed as a racial micro-aggression. Hence, the experience of racism in academic and research libraries was verbal, with no instances of physical abuse according to the views of those who took part in the focus group and the series of interviews:

SCONUL

I have had instances with colleagues who keep getting my name wrong and I don't think my first name is that difficult. Maybe it is some sort of unconscious bias. I have people make comments about the fact that you know, I'm vegetarian and it's because I'm a Hindu … I had a colleague who on multiple occasions said is it okay if I talk about meat in front you. And then I've had *a supervisor in a previous job that during Ramadan she just turned around and said why aren't you fasting and made an assumption that I was Muslim. And then I had to say I'm not. And then she said oh well what are you then. And it was just the phrasing of it just quite confrontational and abrupt.* (Interviewee K)

People making comments about travellers and thinking it is okay to do it and because everyone knows travellers are not good people because what you see on TV is the negative side of it. I have experienced this at school and here at the university. (Interviewee I)

For some reason we seem to get each other's emails. There is another colleague called [name]. People call us each other's names. They are totally different names … and we don't look alike and we don't work closely at all so why does this keep happening? (Interviewee J)

Well it tends to be comments. So, for example a while ago it was the supervisor. Another colleague had made a comment. I think it was something like he was arguing with another colleague about religion or about belief in God. I was sat at a different desk but he walked over and said what about Islam what kind of religion is that? And I said sorry what was that? He said oh nothing. (Interviewee M)

… I [have] certainly witnessed or been around or in the room when some prejudice may have been expressed by colleagues … there's been more than one occasion where comments, very dubious comments have been made about terrorism. (Interviewee B)

You may have a sense of the fact that somebody is not treating you or treating someone else in a way that they ought to or that they're not giving people perhaps the opportunity that they ought to give them. But it's often at times difficult to pin that that is exactly what is happening and to prove it. And this isn't uncommon for any type of institution, this is true, libraries are no different. So, I think that we do, I think we have issues at the point of co-workers that I have some lovely people that I work with. Really, you know, great people that I work with and who are particularly supportive. Probably the best that I've had is right now. But I have some that I know are just seeking to put a dagger in. (Focus group participant 2)

There was acknowledgement among participants that racism was an endemic societal issue so it was not surprising that it had infiltrated the workplace, including the library sector.

On the question of whether racism in the workplace was being adequately addressed, there was concern that complaints of racism against staff and students were not dealt with adequately and a sense that management and HR lacked the willpower to address the issue. There was a strong feeling that there was a lack of institutional will to address racism. This links with the survey findings which noted that 80% of respondents did not feel that their complaints had been resolved to their satisfaction:

Like we've just introduced a sexual harassment, you know, online reporting system but there's not one for racism. (Interviewee C)

I think sometimes they're afraid to do some things because students pay x amount of money for an academic library. You know, they don't wanna take it further, you know… (Focus group participant 6)

Yeah that thought sort of pervades in management level now as well. So it's sort of, 'well students can do what they want now', because that's literally, that's directly what I've been told. That if, as long as students, other students don't complain, students are free to do what they want. And we staff are not included in that so as long as no other students complain. (Focus group respondent 1)

What I think, is that it is the ineffectiveness of the personnel department. There is a lack of willingness to be sued or to take it anywhere. So, if anything potentially negative happens, personnel will do everything in their power, as far as I'm concerned, to mitigate the circumstance. So you will lose because they will not support you. (Focus group participant 3)

I was working in the library and they decided to get some kind of intern people who were doing library qualifications and would give them a chance to work within the environment … They were from different parts of the country. One of them made the mistake of using the N word, the full N word in the back office … so I heard that ringing through the air and couldn't believe it … and just thought no I've gotta go and talk to the senior manager about that … So a whole investigation ensued … It wasn't dealt with properly and it was the most horrendous thing I've ever experienced because of the way it was handled. The victim was made to feel like they had done something wrong by saying it [the N word] was wrong. (Interviewee G)

There was also concern that unions were no longer doing enough to promote equality and diversity. This created a sense that BAME staff were unprotected and lacked adequate workplace representation:

But unions aren't doing that. The unions are helping you to do it yourself … before you were the underdog and you felt you had a bigger voice. They're [the unions] now trying to allow you to be your self-advocate. So they will

then perhaps be behind you but they will never be in front of you anymore. So, people certainly will not stick their neck out. (Focus group participant 3)

Cause the unions are useless … I wouldn't join a union … Unions were formed to keep black people out of work anyway. I've never had a positive or constructive engagement with a union. I don't see what the unions do in a way to make my experience as a BAME person any better within the organisation and I'd be loath to give them my money … (Interviewee H)

5.2.3 Experience of training and development opportunities

Although the level of training and development opportunities were generally perceived to be adequate, opportunities were viewed as lower for library assistants than for librarians. This had a greater adverse impact on BAME staff than on white staff as BAME staff were perceived as being over represented at the lower end of the job ladder. Furthermore, training and development opportunities beyond those required to fulfil the role were limited. Although this was acknowledged as not unique to BAME staff, there was concern that they would be disproportionately affected as they were most in need of these opportunities in order to advance. Lack of funding was viewed as a threat to further training and development opportunities:

I think that's interesting because when I was working as a library assistant there were very few opportunities beyond the mandatory training for me to go to like CPD events. Whereas as a librarian, they're a bit more sort of open to suggestions and allowed me to go to any events or training that I've asked for … if you're sort of higher level the training opportunities are potentially greater. (Interviewee K)

I think up until about ten years ago there were more opportunities because a lot of university libraries would develop the library assistant role and pay for them to go to a library school to do the masters. The last, well, ten years, or slightly more now actually, there isn't the money or the funding to even part support or allow the person to have time off in lieu. (Interviewee B)

SCONUL

… really shockingly bad. I always thought because of my age I was not being offered these opportunities. But I have been thirteen years going up to 14 so you know it only takes a couple of people to cause a problem in the workplace. All it takes is for those people to get in a position of power and it is going to cause problems. (Interviewee G)

If you have got a lack of BAME people in management you are basically saying to them you can't have those equal opportunities of training. You know you are creating a barrier that should not exist and you should instead offer it to them much more to give them that thing. (Interviewee C)

You have to go on your own training. So, for example, if I want to go on a course, I'm going on a course. I don't need you to have to tell me what course I need to go on. But if I'm waiting for you [my manager] I will wait. And certainly if I'm black I'm definitely gonna be [waiting] … So my advice to all my colleagues is, if I see anything that's to do with getting them forward, moving them forward, I will tell them but don't expect your manager to do that. (Focus group participant 3)

5.2.4 Awareness of promotion opportunities and views on the promotion process

The findings from the survey reported earlier revealed that just over half of BAME staff who undertook the survey had experienced the promotion process (55.7%) and a similar number had been successful (55.4%). The survey did not afford the opportunity to gauge general perceptions and views about the issue of promotion. The focus group and in-depth interviews presented such an opportunity.

Whilst most BAME staff were aware of promotion opportunities and some had experienced the promotion process, there was a consensus that such opportunities were limited and that the wider institutional culture did not encourage the promotion of BAME staff. Whilst it was acknowledged that limited opportunities was an issue across the board and not just in relation to BAME staff, given that the structure of

SCONUL

academic and research libraries tends to be flat or horizontal, thereby presenting fewer opportunities for promotion, the view was that BAME staff were more likely to be disproportionately affected – in a competitive situation with limited vacancies, these were more likely to be filled by a white colleague. The following participants made reference to the lack of actual opportunities for promotion:

I think the promotion opportunities are limited unless I think my director dies there is very limited experience for promotion within the library services. (Interviewee H)

I'd say the challenge is most definitely when you're trying to kind of form a career path, it's not something that is easy to do … the opportunities are literally non-existent. I can't tell you how hard it is. (Interviewee G)

I would say that they [promotion opportunities] are pretty limited. That's my personal experience as well as a kind of general sentiment that I hear quite a lot from people. (Interviewee O)

Other participants suggested that being overlooked for promotion was down to wider institutional issues and the existence of a culture at the institutional level which did not encourage BAME staff to be promoted and was in effect discriminatory:

So it was a bit disappointing, felt I was always being overlooked because of this idea of bringing in fresh people. All cases of senior positions being filled were by white men. (Interviewee I)

I expressed an interest in developing my management experience or moving into a management role. There isn't in my experience people who are bringing this [promotion opportunities] to your attention because there are so few roles … I don't think it is a lack of vacancies though. I think it might be a lack of vision. (Interviewee B)

… At some restructuring meetings UNISON representatives who were running these meetings said they had evidence about the fact that throughout the restructure there were larger numbers of ethnic and minority members of staff leaving and the members of staff that were being promoted tended to be white. (Interviewee N)

I applied for a management position in a different team and when I asked about it, because I've not got direct management experience, they said oh no we really want you to apply. It does not matter. We are looking for anyone who can take the position as a starting point. But when I did apply I didn't even get shortlisted for the interview. And I was told it's because you don't have any management experience. And now they have just recently recruited somebody to be manager who does not have management experience and who was a white man. (Interviewee C)

I think the highest grade that you'll see a person of colour would be librarian grade. You wouldn't see anything higher up than that. And I mean in terms of like promotion. (Focus group participant 7)

What is more, it's not just a library problem. So this idea that we can kind of be looking at only our particular library environment and not look at the institutional context in which we operate is a fallacy. We have to look at the institutional context. We have to make sure that there are policies and procedures and actual real change. Institutional will at the most senior level … But you can't, we can't make that change and we can't break that glass ceiling. There has to be institutional will to do it, yeah. (Focus group participant 2)

I was just gonna say sort of from our point of view as well, again we've got a lot going on institutionally and at a high level. But again it's kinda how does that translate and feed down into the departments that you work with. But again, it's hard because for example we had a programme which was

SCONUL

specifically for sort of minority ethnic leaders. Again, it was called aspire leadership programme. So for whatever reason a couple a' years ago, just as people were starting to get interested in it again, they just decided to scrap it. Nobody knows why. … I don't know if it's a cost cutting exercise or if it was something else … there's been calls for it to come back because again it kinda led back to that sort of mentorship thing where, you know, if you've got people who are at a certain grade and are a person of colour, they can mentor people who are trying to get to that level. So again it makes me question, at a sort of lower level, why things like that are happening. (Focus group participant 5)

Although relationship with line managers is viewed as satisfactory in terms of day-to-day activities, BAME staff felt that they were not encouraged to climb the ladder and were left having to carve out their own career pathway. Libraries were not seen as developing the talent possessed by BAME staff:

I've asked my line manager about it. You know, what are the opportunities for progression and I wouldn't say she was overly enthusiastic. (Interviewee D)

Why libraries are failing is that a lot of the people that manage libraries are not managers. They're task-doers that are in the position of management. And they don't see the necessity to capacity build. (Focus group participant 3)

And my experience has been I will go around that [my line manager] because I don't feel as though somebody's actually looking for me, to take me up. So I have to find a path, another path. We are always looking to find other ways, to move around the system to get up because actually even if you are performing well, it's very hard to get somebody to acknowledge it. (Focus group participant 2)

So if somebody leaves then there is an opportunity but nobody has, unless you do it yourself and own it yourself and nobody has taken the chance, the time to … to put you in a position where you could actually practise, pick up skills etcetera. If you don't do it yourself it doesn't happen. And I'm not, I don't know whether that's a black thing or a libraries in general thing, but they don't understand capacity building. (Focus group participant 3)

Even those participants and interviewees who had been successful in getting promoted had their reservations about the process and felt that it was not designed to encourage BAME staff to apply, and that their success had been essentially achieved through their own hard work rather than institutional support:

And I think understanding how a system works allows you to navigate it. So I was aware of promotion because I went out and found out about it and I didn't want people to come and tell me … if my line manager didn't say to me you know you did a great job … I think I'll put you up for promotion, I'll go and tell him. I feel that I've done this and I should be put forward for this. (Interviewee F)

Despite the negativity surrounding the issue of promotion, there was a clear appetite among participants and interviewees who had not been promoted or who had not experienced the process, to pursue it either again or for the first time:

… Yeah definitely, I would. I'm always kind of thinking oh you know, if I had the opportunity to move into management would I succeed, you know, would I be any good at it … so yeah, it has been on my mind. (Interviewee D)

Well at the moment I'd like to move into management, definitely. (Interviewee C)

5.2.5 Views on work–life balance and flexitime

The ability to achieve effective work–life balance was generally seen as achievable, and there was little or no perception that BAME staff were disadvantaged in this respect. However, there was concern about flexitime, which was regarded by some as being indirectly discriminatory towards BAME staff, because flexitime was viewed as an option for the customer services team but not for front-line services. This was perceived to disproportionately affect BAME staff as they were heavily represented among front-line services staff:

> *Flexitime, we have it but for the customer services team. Front-line services team don't have it because we have to cover a service. But if we're accepting that maybe BAME people are coming in at lower levels, that would massively impact those staff more than everyone else … we're told we have to cover a service so we don't have flexitime.* (Focus group participant 1)

5.2.6 Perspectives on ethnic diversity of the library workforce

The need for greater ethnic diversity of the library workforce was a strong sentiment expressed by BAME staff. There was an overwhelming view that greater diversity of the workforce was important from both a social justice, as well as business case standpoint. This view was shared by both those currently working in a diverse environment and by those whose workplace lacked diversity. Comments from participants centred on two interrelated areas: the actual lack of diversity among their workforce; and the failure of the workforce to reflect its user base. Interviewees and participants also cited examples of the benefits to users of having an ethnically diverse workforce. The following interviewees alluded to the lack of workforce diversity:

> *I do enjoy it but because I am such a minority, there is a subconscious feeling that you are not part of the whole big library team. You feel that there is some sort of subconscious racism there.* (Interviewee J)

SCONUL

I think an ethnically diverse workforce is really important. You are able to experience different things from a diverse workforce. A diverse workforce is more successful. They are more innovative and more creative. I am the only BAME person among around 90 library staff. (Interviewee H)

Several interviewees and focus group participants noted how the lack of ethnic diversity among their workforce led to the failure of their library to reflect its user base:

It's essential especially for my current workplace. I would probably say 80–90% of students are from an ethnic minority background … the workforce does not reflect the student demographic. (Interviewee E)

There is a whiteness in libraries that certainly [in] the university I'm working at is not reflected in our student cohort. (Focus group participant 3)

It's a real trust situation. And when they actually see, well, she's black, you know I dunno what it is but they all come to you. And I think being black there has made a difference. And being black at the library I was at before made a huge difference in terms of calming situations down, breaking up a fight, I was in there straight away whereas my white counterparts are already calling security. But by the time they've called security it's done, quashed and we've moved on because you have to have an understanding of what is really going on with the students. And I think my blackness is necessary. (Focus group participant 3)

I recall an incident where a student and I actually ended up going to the same church. And she was so glad to see my face at the reception desk cause she's like, 'oh there's another black person, he'll definitely help me'. The other day we were trying to work out how many ethnic minority staff there are in our whole library. So the library has about two hundred members of staff and we counted about eleven. (Focus group participant 1)

… we have a very diverse student body but literally currently from a team of twenty I'm the only person of colour. Overall of about 120 people I can count on one hand the amount of people of colour that there is in that library. So it makes you aware of it when going into that situation and that presence of whiteness. It does open your eyes more. (Focus group participant 8)

Concern about the lack of ethnic diversity among the workforce of academic and research libraries extended to the upper layers of the job hierarchy, with perceptions that senior management roles within the library profession were dominated by white individuals. There was a feeling that institutional barriers hinder progression of BAME staff as also noted in section 3.2.4. BAME staff were perceived as experiencing a glass ceiling:

And there are very few ethnic minorities working in the library … the further up you go I cannot think of a single ethnic minority person that is beyond, you know, sort of my level really or just above my level. When you're going into directors and senior managers, I don't think I've ever seen one. (Focus group participant 4)

It's incredibly important. You know as I mentioned before there's no people of colour in our senior leadership team … there is a concentration of black staff members in the lower grade roles. People that use the library … we don't reflect that. We live in London and we don't reflect the London communities. (Interviewee O)

The top layers … definitely [lack diversity] because [there] are only white managers in the library and there have been where I've worked. And we've never had somebody who isn't white in a management position. So I think the same is replicated you know in like CILIP and other organisations. (Interviewee C).

SCONUL

One of the biggest challenges that we face is that there isn't like an institutional will … but we can't make that change and we can't break the glass ceiling. There has to be institutional will to do it … (Focus group participant 2)

Participants and interviewees were further frustrated as there was a perception that the lack of diversity in the library profession was not acknowledged nor taken seriously by libraries.

5.2.7 Views on the state of equality and diversity in academic libraries

In the survey findings reported earlier, it was noted that only just over half of respondents (53%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that their workplace values equality and diversity and had an inclusive culture. This was reflected in the findings from the qualitative phase, with mixed views expressed by participants and interviewees. Whilst there was acknowledgement of initiatives that institutions (universities) and libraries had put in place to advance equality and diversity, these were not seen as going far enough, with some viewing them as token gestures or publicity stunts:

The university is more positive in terms of at least trying to promote equality and diversity, more so than the actual library. At least they are doing stuff where I think the library does not do anything at all. (Interviewee C)

If people want to see a change and if you believe that you are the people that effect change and you are the gatekeepers of that, it then boils down to courage. Seeing a person like me every day is a challenge for some people. White people don't want to be challenged. (Interviewee G)

SCONUL

Unfortunately in a profession which is dominated by generally speaking white middle class females it does mean that it is not very diverse. (Interviewee P)

They're starting to do work in this area. They've done it for years and nothing comes out of it and that's why people have got inertia about it. (Focus group participant 2)

I would say that we are still [more]l in the lip-service box-ticking area than for it actually being an integrated part of corporate strategy. (Interviewee O)

One of the things that I always argue when I talk about this [race equality] is that we have to seek first to understand, because actually part of the problem is that we've got to make the case … within our libraries and in our organisations to people who think that there is no case to answer. (Focus group participant 2)

I'd like to hear more from them [senior leadership] about what their strategies are for trying to increase diversity across the university. (Interviewee D)

You know, I don't think people kind of tackle the issue enough. It's kind of just seen as a tick-box exercise or maybe getting like a silver award for equality and diversity and that is it – but what does that actually mean? Like what are they physically doing to kind of address the issue? (Interviewee J).

That financial constraints have pushed equality and diversity initiatives down the agenda of libraries was a concern expressed by focus group participants and interviewees and this was viewed as a threat to the future progress of the equality and diversity agenda in libraries.

SCONUL

5.2.8 Recommendations from BAME staff on advancing equality and diversity in academic libraries

There was no uniform response as to what interviewees and participants felt managers should do to further the equality and diversity agenda in academic and research libraries and what would be viewed as progress within the profession. Instead, there was a wide range of suggestions encapsulated within the following comments:

Increasing the number of staff, the diverse workforce you have and it needs to be prioritised as a key strategic area. It is not seen as a priority and it keeps getting mentioned and then forgotten about and nothing is being done about it really. (Interview J)

If senior leaders are not prepared to stand up and have an open and honest conversation about the BAME attainment gap then it is going to continue. The Vice Chancellor has got to get up and say this is not acceptable and we need to do something about this. And they have to set Key Performance Indicators because something like this has to be measured. (Interviewee H)

I think it would be first of all to educate themselves cause I think almost exclusively they will all be white would be my guess. (Interviewee C)

You need to be creating role models for our students, keeping our eyes open for those people that we have to develop. Create opportunities where we could sort of mentor and develop people to progress into senior roles. (Interviewee F)

Awareness is fundamental, I mean there are some people who are probably not even aware what these things [equality and diversity] mean. (Interviewee N)

SCONUL

I'd like to see a couple of things … for libraries to understand the issues around why, how they [BAME staff] are under-represented and what's happening. So we need to understand statistically and have an evidence base. We need to actually understand how many people we've got and what percentage of the workforce we've got and what percentage we really ought to have. What grades people are on. The fact that people are not actually getting into the senior positions or they're not even being prepared to get into those senior positions. We need statistical evidence to be able to say, to set targets and to put action plans in place to actually move the agenda forward. And we need to actually acknowledge the fact that people aren't actually getting the opportunities to move into those senior positions. (Focus group participant 2)

I think we definitely need to start recognising the experience that BAME staff have … and that's by allowing them to talk about their experience without continually sort of you know, I have had conversations where people get defensive and don't let me finish what I'm saying … I feel like I have to justify why I'm feeling offended by something. (Interviewee K)

5.2.9 Promoting a career in the library profession to the BAME community

Despite the workplace challenges acknowledged by BAME staff, it would not deter them from recommending the library as a profession to individuals from the BAME community:

It's an interesting career and it's not about stamping books. There is more to it than that. (Interviewee F)

I think you've just got to be resilient, you've got to network … I think that anyone coming in from BAME should have a sponsor or a mentor really. (Interviewee G)

There's also a question of mentorship … There's mentorship in terms of when you have young black, Asian, whatever, coming into the library what is their next step? (Focus group respondent 3)

I would say definitely go for it. Because we do need more of us. You know it is completely normal for me to go to meetings and conferences and I am literally the only person who is not white. (Interviewee M)

My suggestion would be definitely apply … and just network really, take any opportunities to network, not just in your institution but outside the institution as well with other universities. (Interviewee J)

I would just say the library profession is welcoming and wonderful for anyone, that's what I would say. (Interviewee N)

I would actually say seriously consider it. It is a fulfilling role and there are so many different roles within this area of work … I think people have an old-fashioned view of it. You know the middle aged old white lady kind of thing telling you off. It's not like that and there are lots of possibilities. (Interviewee I)

I would [recommend it] because it's still a more kinder environment. People are still far more open minded. (Interviewee B)

I would say definitely go for it and be prepared to be vocal and confident cause I think you gonna have to fight a little bit harder to be heard and to get those better jobs … And be prepared to face discrimination I guess. (Interviewee C)

I'd say do it … it's great and it's satisfying to see people learning. It's satisfying to work with students and to get the best out of them. And you know, that for the students they will benefit from seeing people that reflect their own background and you know it's a rewarding career. (Interviewee E).

SCONUL

SCONUL

Most BAME staff had a positive message for BAME individuals considering a career in the library sector, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the challenges they and fellow BAME colleagues faced. The views expressed by BAME staff who took part in the research did not reflect a desire to exit the profession but rather a desire for their institution to improve the work experience of BAME staff.

SCONUL

6 Conclusions and areas for consideration

This research set out to explore the experiences of BAME staff working in academic and research libraries across the UK. What can we conclude from the findings? What do the findings suggest or imply? What do they mean for the future of equality and diversity in academic and research libraries and for relevant stakeholders?

6.1 Conclusions

The lived experiences of BAME staff who took part in this research reveal that academic and research libraries present a challenging workplace environment for BAME staff. The participants feel that they are monitored because of their ethnicity. The problem, or situation, is compounded by the lack of ethnic diversity among the workforce of libraries, an issue which is more apparent further up organisational hierarchies. This appears to be an issue even in academic and research libraries where the overwhelming majority of service users are from ethnic minority groups. This concurs with research conducted by Brook et al. (2015) in relation to the United States which noticed a culture of whiteness pervading academic libraries. Similarly, in relation to the UK, commissioned research undertaken by Williams and Nicholas (2009) exploring the low representation of BAME staff in the library and information science profession noted a vicious circle where perceptions of library staff being mainly white and middle class was deterring BAME individuals from joining, thereby perpetuating the lack of ethnic diversity among the workforce of libraries.

Discrimination based on race and religion represented a problem for BAME staff in this research. In particular, subtle racial micro-aggression appears to be present in the working environment in academic and research libraries. Deitch et al. (2003, p. 1300) term this 'everyday racism', which they define as 'those subtle and pervasive manifestations of racism faced by Blacks on a daily basis in the workplace'. Similar to examples provided by BAME staff in this research, Ogbonna and Harris (2006) in their research uncovered evidence of everyday discrimination in relation to two key issues: religion, and language and communication. BAME staff in this research felt that

complaints of racism were not adequately dealt with, suggesting a weakness in the system. This adds to some BAME staff not bothering to report instances of workplace racism. There was also a feeling that line managers are apathetic and not willing to develop the BAME talent they have among their ranks, which leads to a stifling of BAME staff progression.

On reflection, many of the key findings that emerge from this research are not unique to academic and research libraries. They are evident both across the wider higher education sector and across a number of the UK's public sector institutions (see CIPD, 2017; Rollock, 2019). This illustrates that BAME staff in academic and research libraries share some similar experiences with their counterparts in the wider institutions within which they operate. Outwith the higher education sector, a recent study conducted by the CIPD (2017, p. 3) noted the 'significant lack of racial diversity at the top of UK organisations'. This was also evidenced in earlier commissioned work undertaken by Ethnic Dimension (2015), which explored the barriers that were preventing talented BAME staff from progression in the UK Civil Service. Similarly, BAME staff experience in the NHS reported in the media (Chand, 2018; Randhawa, 2018) noted that BAME staff were less likely to be promoted or made executive directors and also experienced significantly greater discrimination and bullying in the workplace. This situation is mirrored in the uniformed services including the Police and Armed Forces (see Hussain and Ishaq, 2016; Dearden, 2018). The predicament facing BAME staff across the public sector led the Government in 2018 to commission research into whether employers are doing enough to remove barriers facing ethnic minorities when it comes to career progression (Webber, 2018)

6.2 Areas for consideration

The findings represent an opportunity for academic and research libraries to reflect and collectively own the equality and diversity agenda whilst acknowledging that there are also implications for the wider higher education sector within which they operate.

What would constitute progress for academic and research libraries in terms of improving the working lives of BAME staff and advancing the equality and diversity agenda? What would serve as benchmarks or metrics? Some good or best practice initiatives have been recognised in other public sector institutions across the UK which have received plaudits and awards for improving outcomes, despite for decades facing accusations of being white and male dominated and exhibiting a culture of racism. Based on these, and in relation to the recommendations of BAME staff noted in this research, academic and research libraries and associated stakeholders may wish to consider the following as a way of moving the equality and diversity agenda forward and improving the workplace experiences of BAME staff:

- Given that BAME staff do experience racial discrimination, there has to be a zero-tolerance policy to help send out a message that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated from service users, such as students, and from co-workers or managers.

- The human resources function can lead on implementing a more effective system of reporting racial discrimination that instils confidence among those experiencing workplace racism.

- A robust race awareness training programme that particularly challenges unconscious bias is imperative including for library leaders. This would help address racial micro-aggressions including inappropriate and derogatory language, cultural ignorance and challenge stereotypical views that some BAME staff experience.

- A mentorship programme could be considered as a way of helping to coach and mentor BAME staff, especially at the lower levels, so that they can be developed for managerial or higher-level roles. This would ensure that the BAME talent pipeline is harnessed.

- Line managers can be encouraged to identify BAME staff with managerial potential and engage in conversations with those staff during performance appraisals. This would allow such staff to have a clear pathway towards and vision of their future career development.

SCONUL

- Library leaders need to lead from the top and demonstrate that equality and diversity should be a strategic priority rather than a peripheral endeavour. This will prevent marginalisation of the equality and diversity agenda. Senior managers need to consider having a protected budget for equality and diversity initiatives to safeguard against financial pressures.

- Consideration could be given to exploring the current job structures in academic and research libraries to establish the possibility of creating more promoted posts that offer greater opportunities for staff to be rewarded..

- Academic and research libraries should consider ensuring that there are effective mechanisms or forums in place whereby BAME staff can exercise their voice, allowing issues of concern to be captured.

- SCONUL members should consider monitoring the ethnic diversity of their workforce to ensure that academic and research libraries have an evidence base to justify equality and diversity initiatives. This would assist the broader agenda of fostering ethnic diversity.

- Do more outreach work, in line with other public sector institutions such as the uniformed services, to promote the library profession as a career option for the BAME community and take the opportunity to showcase current BAME staff as role models. The BAME staff who participated in this research were clear that they would send out a positive message to anyone from the BAME community wishing to pursue a career in the sector.

- Academic and research libraries, in unison with universities, could consider actively pursuing the Race Equality Charter. This is evidence based and would prove not only that equality and diversity are valued, but are actually practised. This would be particularly fitting in the context of this research as the Charter aims to improve the representation, progression and success of BAME staff and students in higher education.

The essential purpose of this research was to document the lived experience of BAME staff currently working in academic and research libraries. By so doing, it has provided a platform for BAME staff to air their views and exercise their voice. This research reveals that despite the challenges facing BAME staff, this is not facilitating their exit from the profession. Rather, there is a determination that the challenges be addressed. There is an indication that BAME staff feel that more members of the BAME community should enter the profession and that being part of the system is to be part of the solution.

There are implications from the research for stakeholders such as BAME staff, other staff, senior and line mangers, library directors, SCONUL, CILIP, BAME networks associated with the library profession, students and the wider university community, including the university leaders. The equality and diversity agenda has to be collectively owned and collectively manoeuvred to ensure that all voices are heard, and to increase the chances of success. With this in mind, it should be recognised that staff represent vital human resources that need to be respected, nurtured and developed in order for staff to reach their full potential and thereby ensure the ultimate success of organisations. Academic and research libraries need to create an organisational culture that values equality and diversity in which BAME staff feel that a positive climate for diversity exists (Hicks-Clarke and Iles, 2000).

This research is not intended to assign blame for the challenges experienced by BAME staff. Rather, it represents a starting point and an opportunity to initiate a dialogue, and in this sense this report should be viewed as developmental and constructive.

7 Concluding commentary

Some of our members may find reading this report an uncomfortable experience and some may find that it challenges their own assumptions about the culture and working environment they have created in their own libraries. Some may even want to dismiss the findings, or comfort themselves with the idea that this doesn't apply in their own institution. This would be short sighted. We should all be willing to really listen to the views being expressed here; to absorb them as a true reflection of our colleagues' lived experiences and to have the same conversations in our own institutions.

Others may be disappointed that the report does not identify a clear set of recommendations and associated actions that we should all immediately take. While such an instinct is understandable, we believe that moving swiftly into a set of measurable outputs is unlikely, on its own, to deliver the kind of fundamental changes we need to see.

Those changes are in thinking, attitudes and behaviour, including our own. They include policies and processes across our libraries and broader institutions.

We therefore propose to work closely with colleagues across our member libraries to explore change in the following six areas:

1. Leadership

   How do we ensure that as library leaders we have the skills, confidence and knowledge to be effective agents of change within our own libraries and across our institutions? What support can SCONUL offer its members to equip them to do so? What would it mean to put equality and diversity at the centre of our strategic priorities? What modelling will board members do to demonstrate effective action in their own institutions? All SCONUL Board members have committed to unconscious bias training as a first step.

SCONUL

2. Voice

   How can we support members to listen actively to the experiences of BAME colleagues? What models and mechanisms can we develop as institutional leaders to give BAME colleagues the opportunity to speak and to be heard, and to have their views actively considered and acted on?

3. Zero tolerance

   It is clear from the report that while there might, in theory, be zero tolerance of racism within our institutions, this isn't the reality BAME colleagues experience. We need to understand what is going wrong, including with how complaints are captured, and how our responses to complaints are falling short.

4. Cultural and behavioural change

   Inappropriate comments, derogatory language and other forms of micro-aggression were widely reported by those taking part in the research. What levers do we have for changing the behaviours and cultures of our workforce, including race awareness training and the adoption of the Race Equality Charter? What can we learn from other sectors which have done this well?

5. Active support for BAME staff

   The report suggests that a mentorship programme could be developed to support BAME staff moving into managerial roles and that line managers should be encouraged to support staff with managerial potential. What other levers do we have or could we develop? How might our current structures, job descriptions and HR policies be hindering rather than supporting the development of talent from BAME communities?

6. Effective partnerships for change

   Libraries are embedded in the policy, budgetary and cultural environment of their own institutions, and bringing about change is almost certain to involve engagement at senior levels within their institution. What evidence do members need to argue for

change and who might provide that and how? How might we work with colleagues in CILIP, in library schools and beyond to promote librarianship as a profession to BAME communities?

In all of these areas, we will need to work with partners within and outside the institution. We will need to draw on expertise from those who have been effective advocates for and agents of change from the widest of backgrounds. We will need to enlist expert help, but we will also need to become experts ourselves. We will need to invest time and resources in the work.

Next steps

We launched this report at our conference in June 2019, where we briefed our members on its outcomes through workshops. We will also be asking each of our regional consortia to host a discussion of the outcomes, to be led by a member of the SCONUL Board, over the next few months.

Following those conversations with members, the Workforce Development Task and Finish Group which I currently chair will agree a set of initial actions that can be implemented now with the engagement and support of our members.

We shall also recruit a group of SCONUL leaders to focus on taking this work forward. We will ask them to produce a programme of work over the course of a year, looking at the six areas identified above, sponsored and supported by the SCONUL Board. They will need to engage closely with the SCONUL community to consider and design interventions, as well as drawing on expertise from beyond our sector and on evidence of what has been effective in other professions.

The SCONUL Board will be the sponsor and driver of all this work and it will take the lead on looking at SCONUL's own role and on questions of evaluation and impact. We shall lead on and model the change we believe we need to see.

SCONUL

I would like to thank Regina Everitt at the University of East London, John Dowd at the University of Birmingham and Ann Rossiter at SCONUL, as well as Mohammed Ishaq from the University of the West of Scotland and Asifa Hussain from Heriot-Watt University, for their work to date.

We warmly welcome comments from anyone interested in this report and the outcomes that will follow it. Please feel free to contact me, Pete Ryan (the SCONUL Chair) or any other members of the Board or Workforce Development group at SCONUL, including those who want to be involved in the work we are planning. Further information is available at http://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/bame-staff-experiences-of-academic-and-research-libraries

Caroline Taylor, Vice-Chair of SCONUL and Chair of the Workforce Development Group
University Librarian, University of Leicester

References

Brook, F., Ellenwood, D. and Lazzaro, A. (2015), 'In pursuit of anti-racist social justice: denaturalizing whiteness in the academic library', *Library trends*, 64:2, pp. 246–84

Chand, K. (2018), The NHS relies on its BME staff – so why do they still face discrimination? (Online). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jul/09/nhs-bme-staff-discrimination [accessed 9 February 2019]

CILIP and ARA (2015), A study of the UK Information Workforce. (Online). Available at: https://archive.cilip.org.uk/research/workforce-mapping [accessed 24 January 2019] [available only to CILIP members]

CIPD (2017), Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: London

Dearden, L. (2018), British police 'still institutionally racist', senior officer admits as new recruitment strategy launched. (Online). Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-racist-uk-recruitment-bame-institutionally-npcc-strategy-women-disability-a8581646.html [accessed 12 February 2019]

Deitch, E. A., Barsky, A., Butz, R. M., Chan, S., Brief, A.P. and Bradley, J.C. (2003), 'Subtle yet significant: The existence and impact of everyday racial discrimination in the workplace', *Human relations*, 56:11, pp. 1299–1324

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) (2011), The Experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England, available at: https://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/experience-of-bme-staff-in-he-final-report.pdf [accessed [10 February 2019]

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) (2017), Equality in higher education: Staff statistical report 2017, available at: https://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/equality-in-higher-education-statistical-report-2017 [accessed 18 December 2018]

Ethnic Dimension (2015), Identifying and Removing Barriers to Talented BAME Staff Progression in the Civil Service

Hicks-Clarke, D. and Iles, P. (2000), 'Climate for diversity and its effects on career and organisational attitudes and perceptions', *Personnel review*, 29:3, pp. 324–45

Hussain, A. and Ishaq, M. (2016), 'Equality and diversity in the British Armed Forces: progress, challenges and prospects', *Defence and security analysis*, 32:1, pp. 36–50

Kumra, S. and Manfredi S. (2012), Managing equality and diversity, Oxford: Oxford University Press

SCONUL

Ogbonna, E. and Harris, L. C. (2006), 'The dynamics of employee relationships in an ethnically diverse workforce', *Human relations*, 59:3, pp. 379–406

Randhawa, M. (2018), 'Closing the gap on BME representation in NHS leadership: not rocket science', available at: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2018/03/bme-representation-nhs-leadership [accessed 9 February 2019]

Rollock, N. (2019). 'Staying power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors", available at: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/staying-power/pdf/ucu_rollock_february_2019.pdf [accessed 25 March 2019]

Webber, A. (2018), 'Government to see if BAME career progression has improved', (Online). Available at: https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/bame-career-progression-2018-mcgregor-smith-review/ [accessed 3 February 2019]

Williams, P. and Nicholas, D. (2009), Exploring the low representation of Black and minority ethnic staff in the library and information science profession: A case study of London, CIBER Research – Department of Information Studies, University College London. Also available at http://ciber-research.eu/download/20090701-bme.pdf

SCONUL

Appendix 1: Survey schedule

1. What is your gender?
    -   Female
    -   Male
    -   Other – non-binary

2. What is your age-group?
    -   Under 25
    -   26–35
    -   36–45
    -   46–55
    -   56–65
    -   66 or over

3. In which geographic region are you employed?
    -   Scotland
    -   North West / North East / Yorkshire and the Humber
    -   East Midlands / West Midlands
    -   Greater London
    -   South West / South East (excluding Greater London)
    -   Wales
    -   Northern Ireland
    -   Republic of Ireland

4. Which of the following best describes your job role?
    -   Professional (e.g. library related qualification)
    -   Non-professional
    -   Other

5. How would you describe your work-pattern?
    -   Full-time
    -   Part-time
    -   Other

6. What is your contract status?
    -   Permanent
    -   Fixed-term
    -   Casual / zero-hours contract

SCONUL

7. How long have you worked for your current employer?
    - Less than 1 year
    - Between 1 and 5 years
    - Between 6 and 10 years
    - More than 10 years

8. How would you define your ethnicity? *
    - Asian / Asian British – Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; other Asian
    - Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean
    - Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Group – White and Black Caribbean; White and Black African; White and Asian; other mixed
    - Other ethnic groups

    * Options provided based on 2011 Census as reported by the Office for National Statistics

9. What religion are you? *
    - Christian
    - Muslim
    - Buddhist
    - Hindu
    - Sikh
    - Jewish
    - No religion
    - Other
    - Prefer not to say

    * Options provided based on 2011 Census as reported by the Office for National Statistics

10a. Have you ever applied for promotion?
    - Yes
    - No

    If yes, go to question 10b. Otherwise go to question 11.

10b. If yes, were you successful?
    - Yes
    - No

11a. Have you ever experienced racial discrimination at work either from a co-worker or service user or both?

- Yes
- No

If yes, go to question 11b. Otherwise go to question 12.

11b. If yes, did you report it?

- Yes
- No

If yes, go to question 11c. Otherwise go to question 12.

11c. If yes, was it resolved to your satisfaction?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know – Ongoing

12. To what extent to do agree with the following statement: 'My workplace values equality and diversity and has an inclusive culture'?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree / don't know

Thank you once again for taking the time to complete the survey. If you are willing to assist further with this research project and are interested in being involved in a focus group of BAME staff or a one to one interview with the research team, please enter your contact details below:

Email:

Mobile or other number:

Appendix 2: Visual illustration of survey results

Figure 1: Gender of respondents
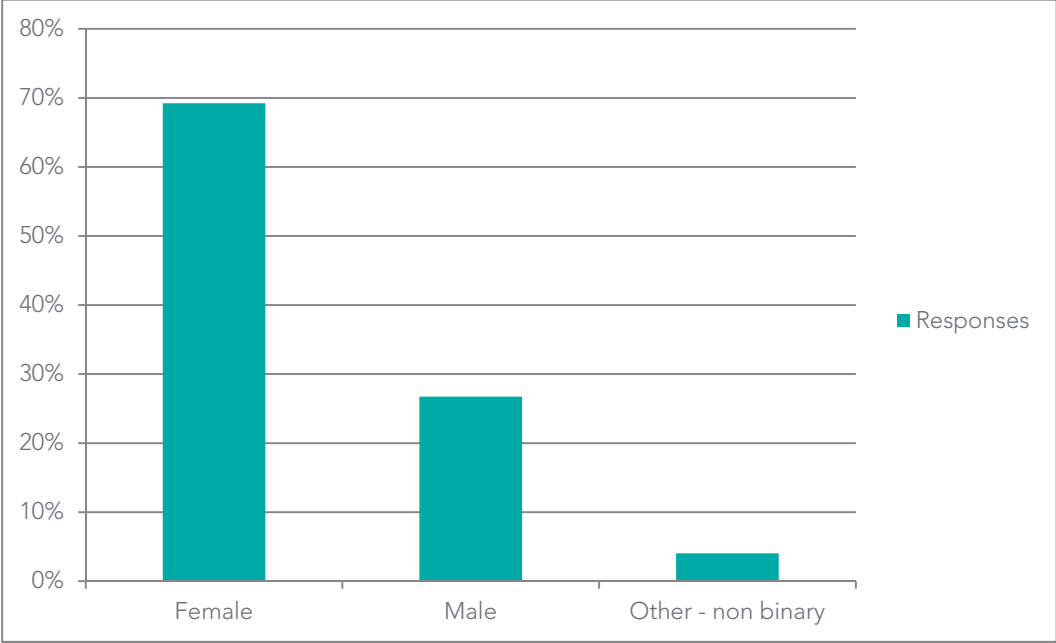
Figure 2: Age-group of respondents

SCONUL
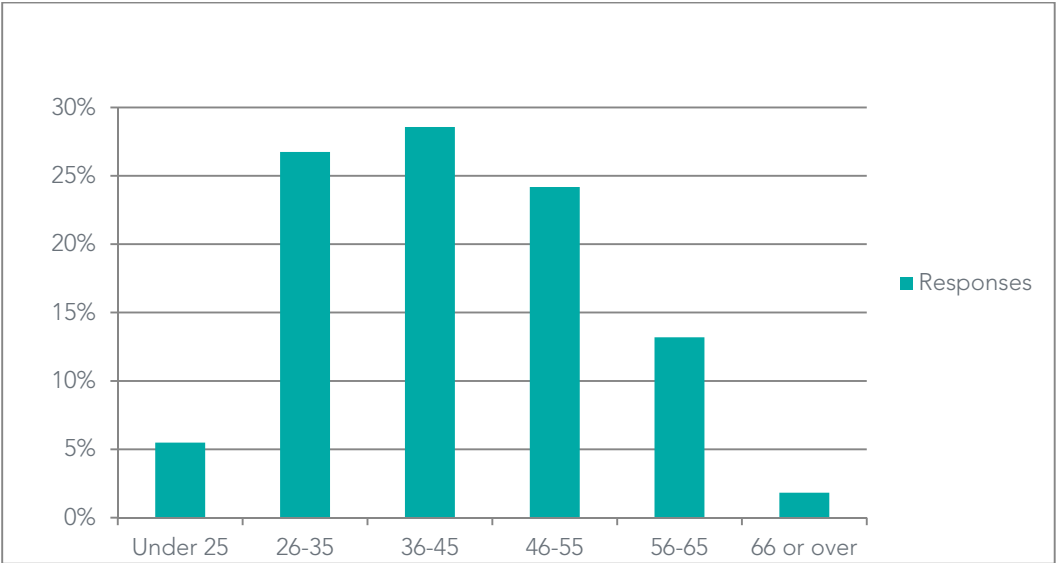
Figure 3: Geographic region where respondents employed
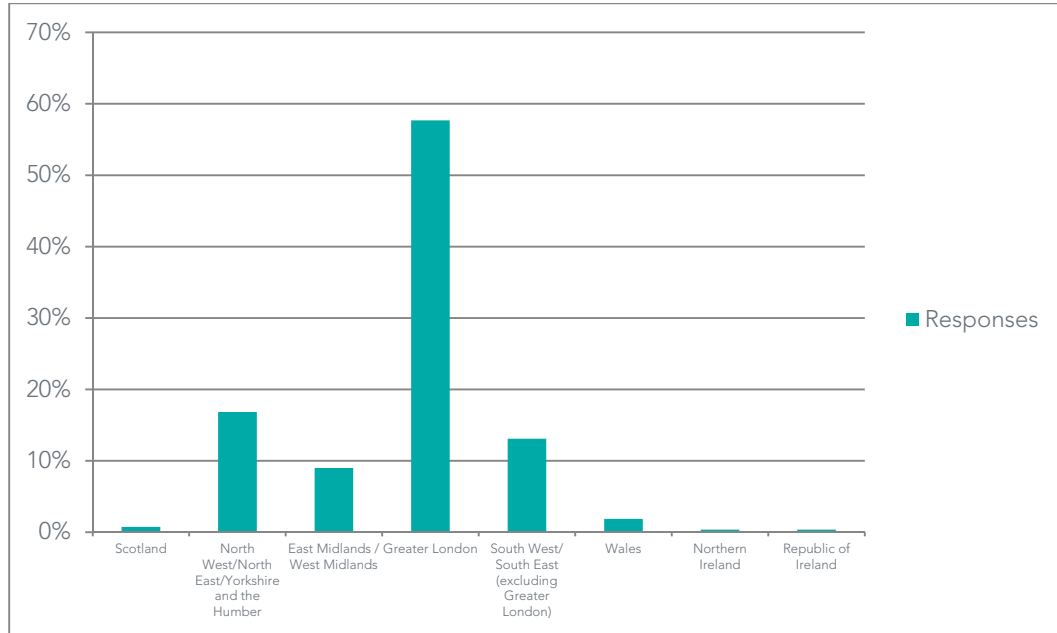
Figure 4: Respondents' duration of service in current employment
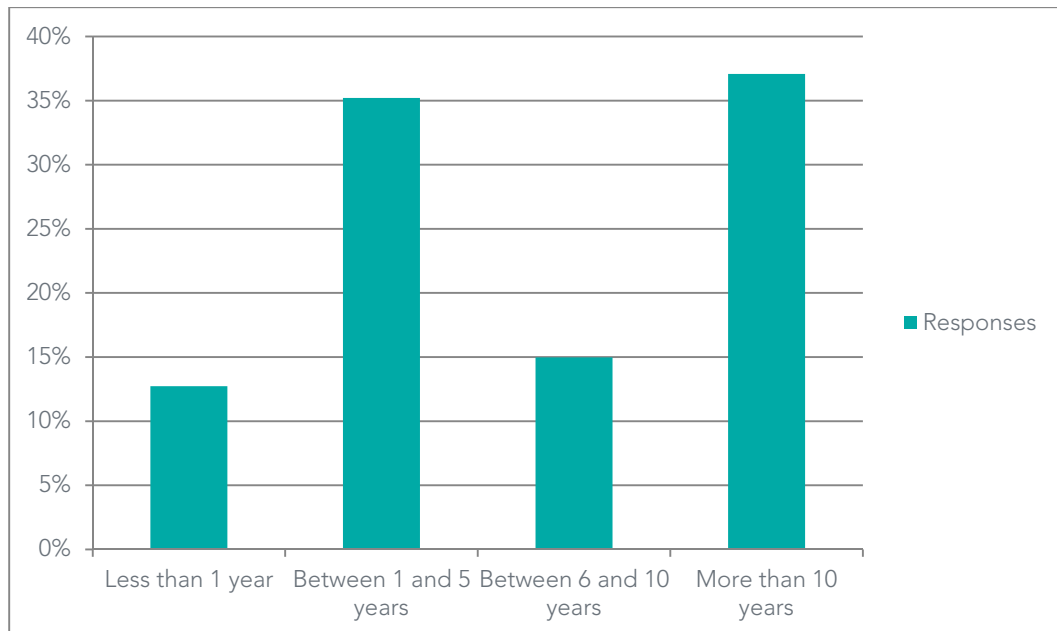
Figure 5: Contract status of respondents
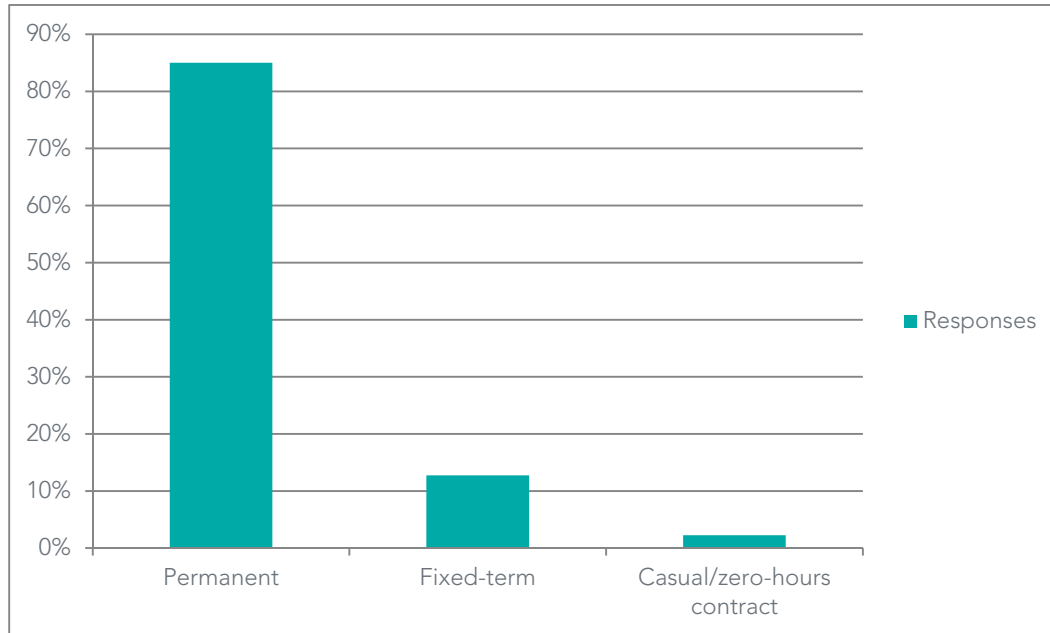
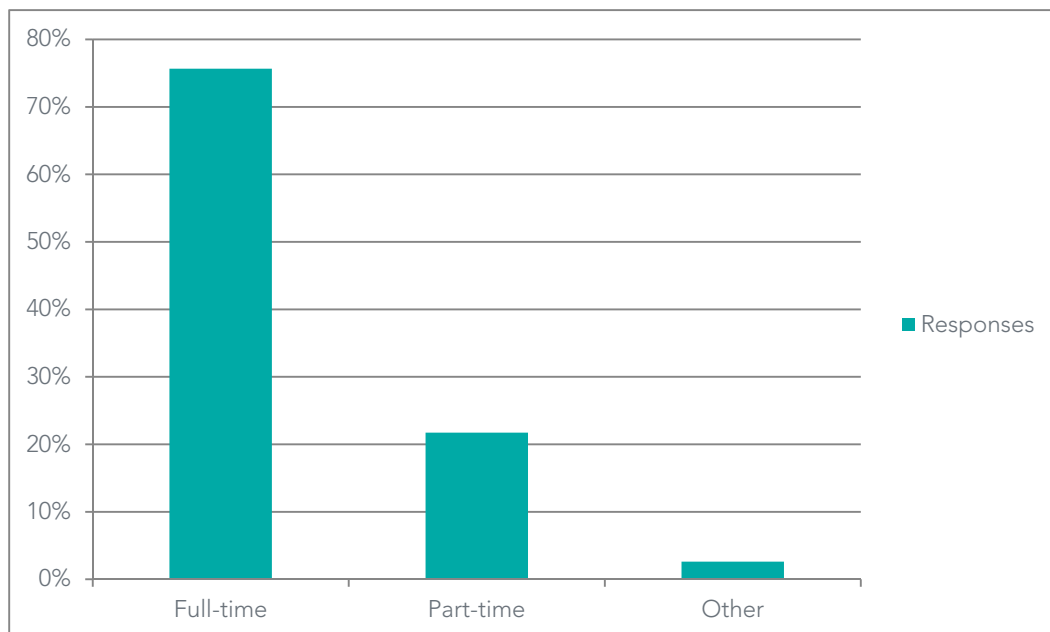## Figure 6: Respondents' mode of employment
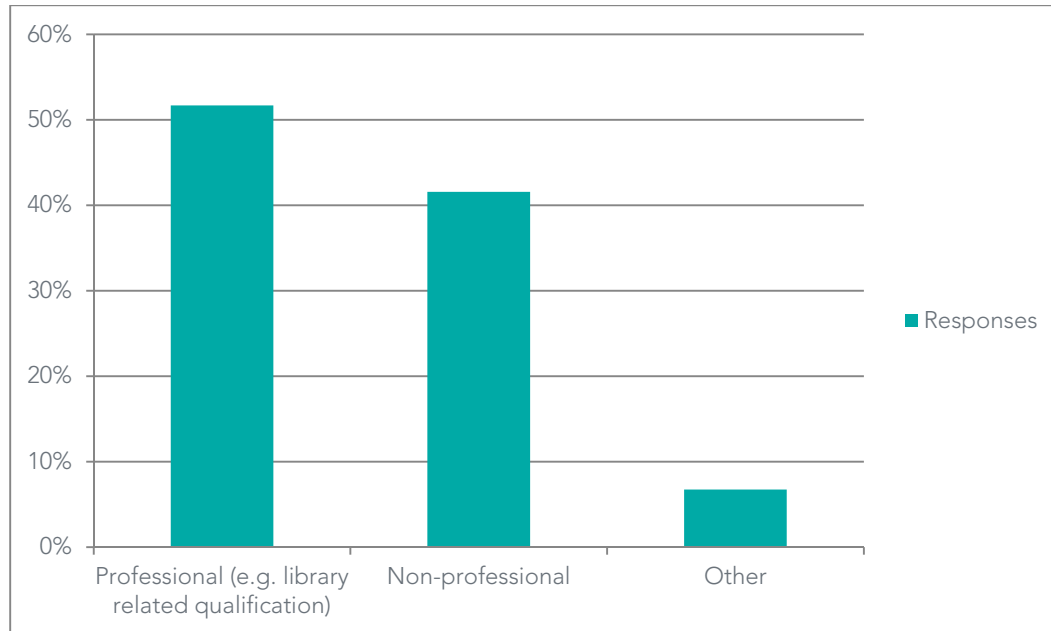
Figure 7: Classification of respondents' job role
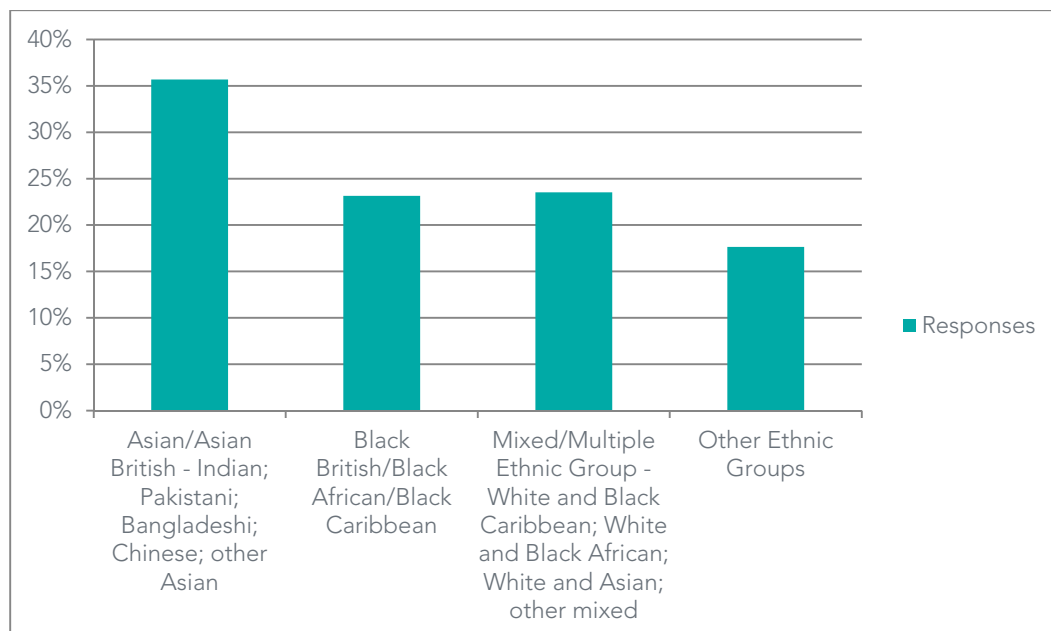

Figure 8: Ethnicity of respondents

SCONUL

Figure 9: Religion of respondents
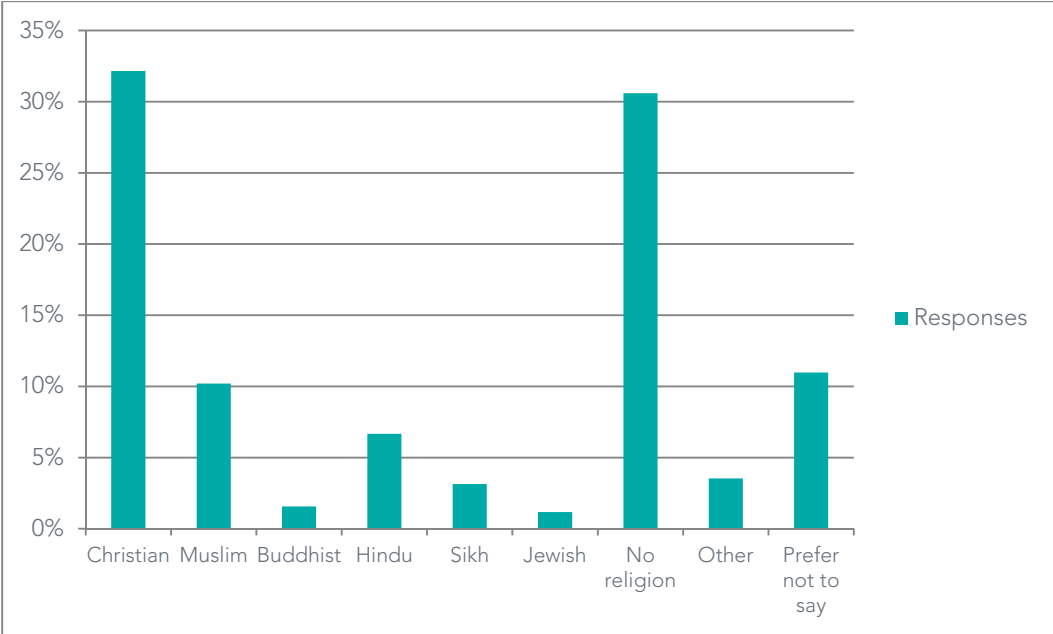
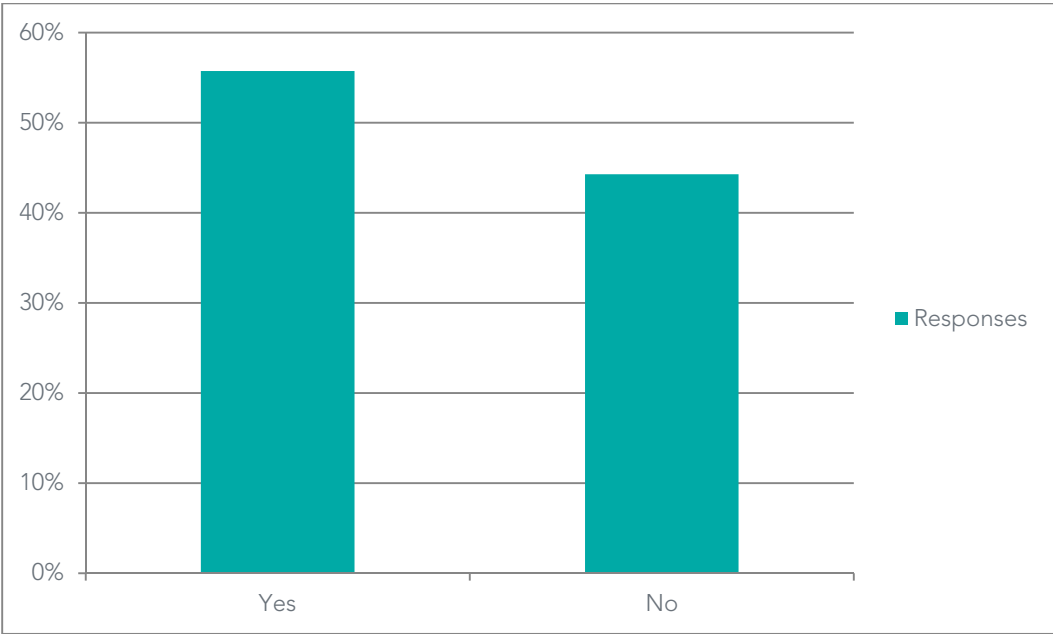## Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who had applied for promotion

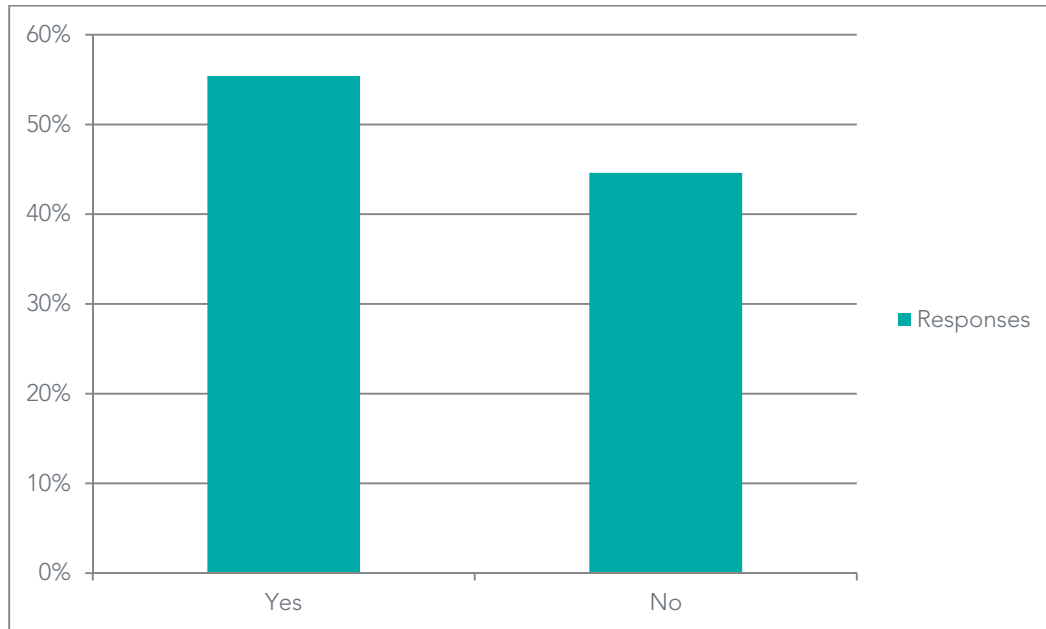Figure 11: Percentage of respondents whose promotion application was successful

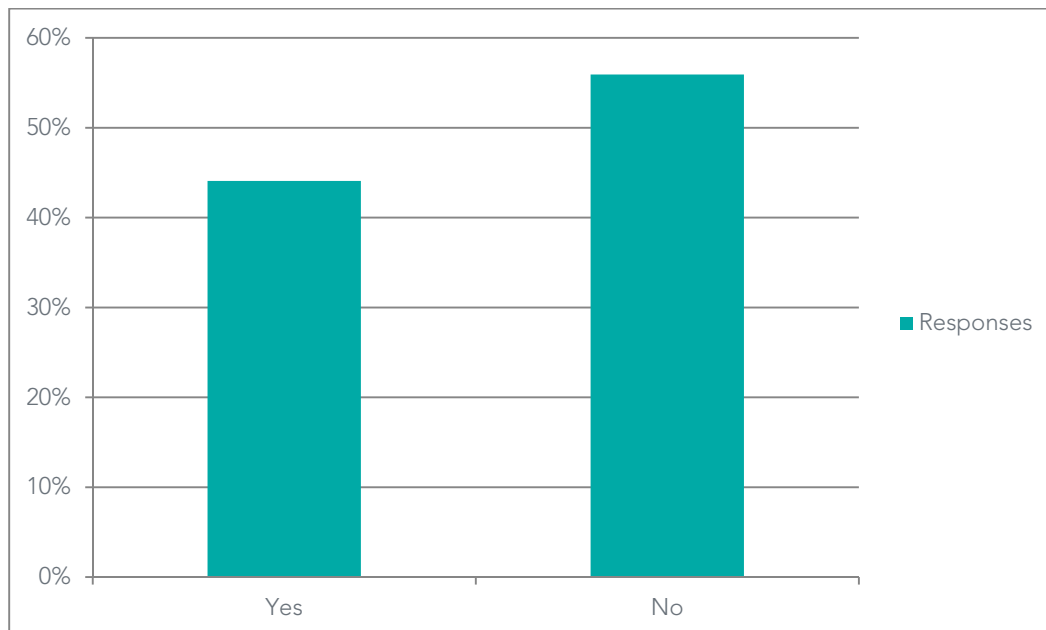Figure 12: Whether respondents had experienced racial discrimination at work

Figure 13: Percentage of those experiencing racial discrimination who had reported it
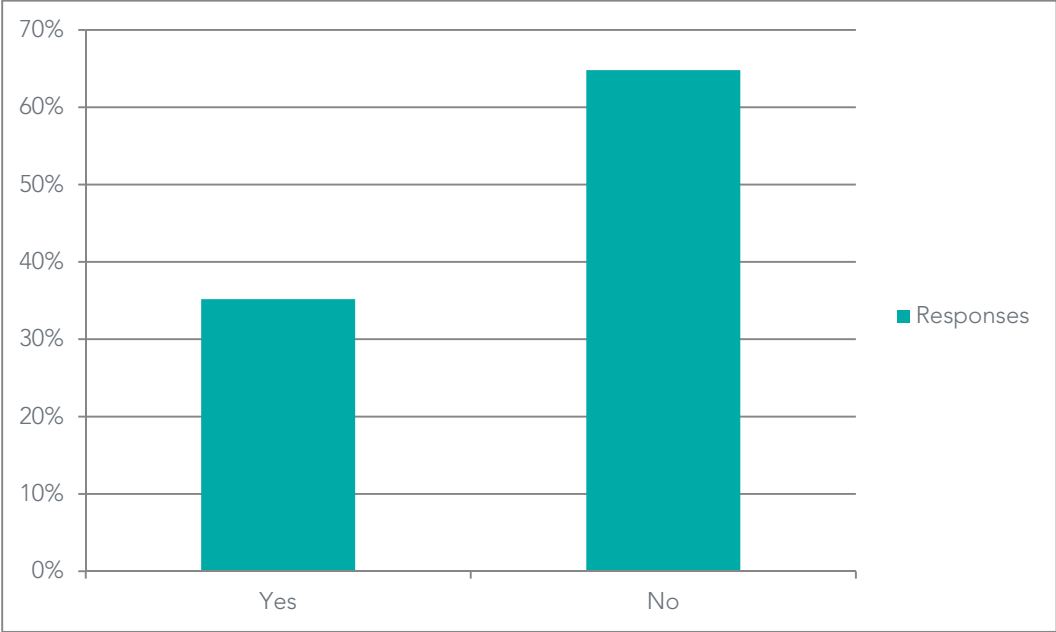

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents whose complaints against racial discrimination had been resolved satisfactorily
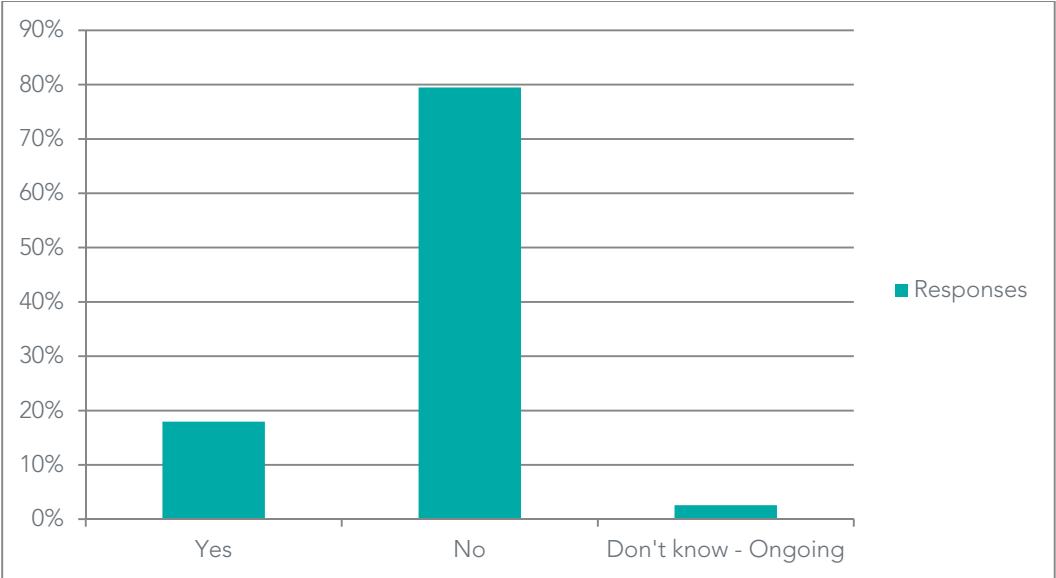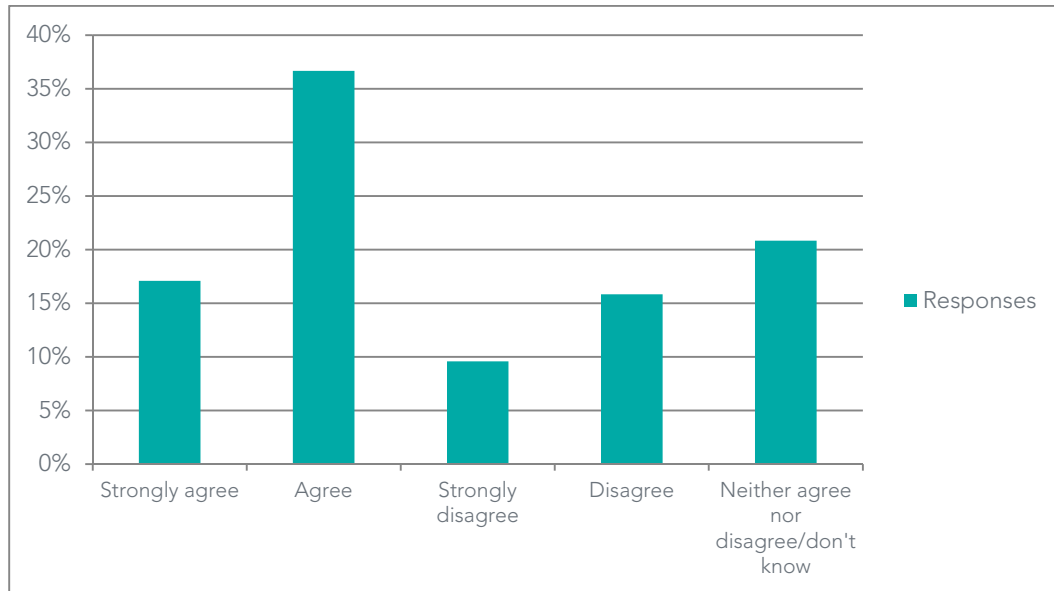
Figure 15: The extent to which respondents agree that their workplace values equality and diversity and has an inclusive culture

Appendix 3: Focus group schedule

- Experience of working in an academic library

- Relationship with co-workers / managers / library users

- Views on whether discrimination encountered in the workplace / source of discrimination / how it was dealt with, if relevant

- Opportunities for promotion / experience of promotion process

- Work–life balance / flexible working opportunities

- Level of employee voice and consultation opportunities

- Awareness of employer initiatives to advance the equality and diversity agenda

- Availability of appropriate training and development opportunities to execute job role effectively

- Whether organisation offers suitable rewards and incentives to employees

SCONUL

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

- Motivation for pursuing a career in the information / library profession
- How did you become aware of employment opportunities in this sector?
- Experience of the recruitment / selection process
- Awareness / experience of promotion opportunities/process
- Views on relationship with line managers / senior managers / level of support received
- Perceptions of current role. What do you most enjoy about your role? What do you least enjoy? Challenges faced
- Views on whether more closely monitored due to being a BAME member of staff / level of awareness / sense of consciousness of being a BAME staff member
- Experience of racial discrimination in the workplace and source of any discrimination
- Views on importance of an ethnically diverse workforce
- Whether adequate level of training and development opportunities made available
- Views on whether workplace values equality and diversity
- Suggestions as to what the profession / senior managers can / should do to further advance equality and diversity
- Finally, what would be your message to BAME individuals considering a career in this sector?

SCONUL

Appendix 5: Sample of participation information sheet

Name of Department / School: School of Business and Enterprise
Researchers: Dr Mohammed Ishaq / Dr Asifa Maaria Hussain
Title of Research: BAME staff experiences of academic and research libraries

Dear participant,

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please feel free to ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The increasing diversity of the UK and the global movement of people are reflected on the campuses of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with the presence of students from diverse ethnic, racial, national and religious backgrounds. The same cannot be said of staff diversity across various job categories with research conducted by the Equality Challenge Unit (2017) showing staff representation from Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in both academic and professional and support roles lagging considerably behind those classed as white. The situation is similar when it comes to the library profession, where a marked lack of diversity is very much noticeable. This research in relation to the experience of BAME library staff in HEIs represents a pertinent opportunity to explore this and related diversity issues. It is hoped that the results of the study will generate an evidence base that contributes to the process of informing future policy and practice in relation to fostering ethnic diversity within academic and research libraries.

The research is part of a wider project looking at a range of aspects related to HR issues and workforce development for SCONUL members. Hence, as an academic at the University of the West of Scotland, I am leading on this part of the wider project on behalf of SCONUL.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. I or my representative will describe the study and go through the information sheet which will be given to you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agree to take part. You are free to withdraw anytime without giving a reason.

SCONUL

What will you do in the project?

If you agree to participate in the research, you are required to take part in either a one-to-one interview or focus group. During the interview / focus group, I or my colleague will lead a discussion on a number of themes and issues relevant to this research. You are free to respond as you wish to the interview questions or group discussion.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been chosen to take part because you represent a stakeholder whose contribution would be valuable in meeting the objectives of the research.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

During the research you will not be exposed to any physical, psychological or legal risk or harm. Interview questions and focus group themes have been structured in such a way as to protect your privacy and no pressure will be put on you to answer sensitive questions. All information provided will be anonymised and kept confidential.

What happens to the information in the project?

Every care will be taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. All information received will be stored securely and out with the reach of any third party.

The University of the West of Scotland is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of this legislation.

What happens next?

If you are happy to be involved in the research then please proceed to take part in the interview / focus group, which will be viewed as your agreed consent, and sign and return the consent form either by email for those being interviewed, or following the conclusion of the focus group. If you do not wish to be involved, then you may decline to be interviewed or exit the focus group before commencement.

Research ethics

This study was granted ethical approval by the UWS School of Business and Enterprise Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns, during or after the investigation please contact:

School of Business and Enterprise
University of the West of Scotland
Paisley Campus
High Street
Paisley
PA1 2BE

Contact details of lead researcher: Dr Mohammed Ishaq: mohammed.ishaq@uws.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Sample of consent form

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST *of* SCOTLAND

Names of researchers: Dr Mohammed Ishaq / Dr Asifa Maaria Hussain

Please initial / check box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

4 I agree to the interview being audio recorded. ☐

Name of participant _____   Date _____

Signature _____

Researcher: _____   Date _____

Signature _____

SCONUL