



# Routes into community influence

## Community research project report

Lawrence Hill Community Representatives,  
Wellspring Settlement and  
University of Bristol

November 2021



This report was authored by  
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## About this report

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## Acknowledgments

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## Executive summary

The community research project 'Routes into Community Influence' was carried out by a team of Community Researchers in Lawrence Hill, Bristol between May-August 2021, with support from Wellspring Settlement's Economic Resilience and Community Inclusion teams and researchers from the University of Bristol. The project was funded by the UKRI QR Strategic Priorities Fund, administered by the University of Bristol.

'Routes into Community Influence' was a collaborative project that involved the recruitment, training, and support of six Community Researchers in Lawrence Hill. Wellspring Settlement administered and managed the project, with researchers from the University of Bristol providing support in research methods, analysis, and ethical guidance. The Community Researchers developed the research methods that were used and collected and analysed data through questionnaires. Whilst all parties contributed to this report, full credit belongs to the Community Researchers – whose hard work and voices are at the centre of this work.

This report explores and evaluates the experience and opinions of Lawrence Hill's residents on employment opportunities in their local area – as well as their aspirations regarding work, perceived barriers and potential routes of support. As well as tracking current employment status, the researchers asked respondents to detail how happy they were in their current/main job; what their goals were; what they identified as barriers to work; their current skills/training base and how they perceived the employment market.

The research found a significant number of respondents who did not understand how the UK job market works; felt recruitment often excluded them; and self-excluded themselves from opportunities – due to a perception that there is too much competition and employers do not recognise their transferable skills. Frustration was expressed at a perceived lack of transferability of overseas qualifications to the UK workplace, and that current training offers were not sufficiently sector-based, with in-work experience difficult to obtain.

There was also a well-voiced perception that there are few to no available employment opportunities within the Lawrence Hill ward – with limited opportunities for progressive career development. 85% of respondents felt there were no opportunities and very few employers in Lawrence Hill. Respondents stated that employers should be more visible and show a willingness to expand their recruitment processes to include local people, as well as being more inclusive, fair and equal in their opportunities for progression.

In light of these findings, we make two inter-locking recommendations, to be taken forward by Wellspring Settlement.

1. The establishment of a Community Employer Forum, to which the report's partners would provide support in developing paths to local, sustainable employment and community initiatives, building relationships in the local community.
2. For any Forum to partner with and build on the success of Wellspring Settlement's BOOST Finance Project and the West of England Works Programme, with a view to creating seamless links into training and work opportunities.

This report presents the findings from the community research project 'Routes into Community Influence' carried out in Lawrence Hill between May and August 2021. The research project was funded by the UKRI QR Strategic Priorities Fund, administered by the University of Bristol, and delivered in partnership with a team of six Community Researchers, Wellspring Settlement's Economic Resilience and Community Inclusion teams and researchers at the University of Bristol.

## The context for this project

The UK's understanding of, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic has been significantly shaped by top-down narratives generated from quantitative survey data that is often collected online. This results in narratives skewed towards those who are digitally connected and generally better off, while those less well connected and more likely to have been heavily impacted by the pandemic have been less able to have their voices heard. As the UK continues to move through this unprecedented crisis, the terms of public consultation around promises to 'build back better' are also being set by those living outside of the communities that such policies are designed to help. As a result, communities are asked their views on topics that are often deemed important by others, rather than being asked about what matters to them. Any 'Building Back Better' or 'Levelling Up' agenda must be routed in investment in people and communities – and this begins with ensuring that their voices, aspirations and perceived barriers are included in any conversation about identifying issues and potential solutions.

Working with communities in Bristol that have borne the brunt of the pandemic, the Routes into Community Influence project was established to re-insert missing voices and experiences into narratives of a post-Covid future. Our aim was to explore opportunities to shift the balance of power to allow individuals and communities to set their own agendas for change and re-localise ideas.

Wellspring Settlement works closely with community members around employment issues and sensed, even before the pandemic, that something wasn't working across the city within employability support projects. There was a disconnect between employers and people from marginalized areas. The support set up to move people into employment was often top down and target driven, which led to people's motivations and aspirations being overlooked. In addition, previous back-to-work support initiatives were felt to have over-promised and under-delivered to employers.

Good liaison between employers and residents should be about bringing people together and building relationships, with an intermediary organisation creating space and upskilling individuals to be better prepared for employment whilst offering support to enable people to both sustain and progress in employment. This is a longer-term objective for all – which forms the motivation for this project and report.

**Project aim: Better solutions to community concerns about employment and employer engagement and ensure sustainable outcomes for individuals looking for work and maintaining employment in Lawrence Hill.**

A central aim of the 'Routes into Community Influence' project was to find a better solution to community concerns about employment and employer engagement – and to help find better, sustainable outcomes for individuals looking for work and maintaining employment in Lawrence Hill. To do so, we wanted to get a sense of why people have struggled to get, maintain, and progress in employment. Why do people seek out employment support and what would really work?

## **Aims and outcomes**

This project was driven by the objective of collecting individual experiences and opinions of the various ways that Lawrence Hill residents, often overlooked in reporting and data collection, have experienced the challenges of 2020-2021 in terms of employment and opportunities. To do so, University of Bristol researchers collaborated with Wellspring Settlement to recruit and support a group of community members with lived experience of employment issues to research these issues and plan a series of actions to address highlighted issues.

This team of Community Researchers were trained to gather community intelligence on employment related issues to inform current and future work, supported by Wellspring Settlement's BOOST Finance Project and West of England Works Programme staff.

A shared goal of all parties involved was to develop the confidence of the community, empowering them to be part of the actions put in place with the support of Wellspring Settlement – and to see a real positive change to the issues raised.

This report is presented to centre the voices of the community in discussions of work and employment in Lawrence Hill.

## **Lawrence Hill**

The Lawrence Hill ward is found in the centre of the city of Bristol and includes districts of Barton Hill, St Philips Marsh and Redcliffe, Temple Meads and parts of Easton. It has an overall population of 19,600, making it one of the largest wards in the city, alongside Central (21,800) and Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston (21,400). In recent years the age profile of the area has changed with a higher proportion of working age people (31.9% Lawrence Hill compared to a city average of 27.3%) and children/young people in the area (25.6% Lawrence Hill compared to a city average of 18.5%).

Lawrence Hill has a high proportion of black and minority ethnic residents. In the ward, 33.6% of the ward are White British, 20.2% Black African, and 10.4% Other Black. Lawrence Hill ward has the highest proportion of people not born in the UK. The ward also has a high proportion of rented accommodation, high rise overcrowding and higher than average levels of unemployment. 35% of the population are economically inactive, 36% are economically deprived and 25% of the working age population are unemployed.

## Profile of respondents

In total, 54 people living in the Lawrence Hill ward completed a **questionnaire for the 'Routes into Community Influence' project**. Demographic data was collected from all respondents – and is presented in Appendix A.

The age and gender of the respondents is largely reflective of the diversity within the ward. Of the respondents that Community Researchers spoke to, 59% did not have English as their first language and across the respondents a total of 16 different languages were spoken. Our team of Community Researchers also had a broad range of spoken languages and came from a range of ethnicities. This helped them to work with a broad spectrum of the community to gather a wide range of views. Many of those surveyed had qualifications, obtained from the UK and/or outside of the UK. Qualifications beyond GCSES and A-Levels included NHC, H&V, NVQ, ESOL. Destinations outside of the UK where qualifications were obtained included Algeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Sweden, Somalia, Poland, Pakistan, Kenya, Latvia & Gambia.

A large percentage of the respondents were employed, many on a part time, often precarious basis. Employers included the NHS, Primary Care, various cleaning agencies, Bristol City Council, IKEA, Amazon, Uber, Iceland and a range of primary and secondary schools. 24% of respondents opted not to share their employer's details and 7% stated they were self-employed. 25% of the respondents asked were not claiming Universal Credit, compared to 27% that were.

# Findings

## Current working position

Most respondents reported feeling happy in their current/main job. Respondents in work were asked about the positive and negative elements of their current work and identified:

### Positives:

- **Location and work fitting in with other demands** on their time. A job being local (meaning no commute necessary) and/or fitting with school hours was a positive benefit. Flexibility – both in terms of hours and employers recognising other needs (i.e., praying at work) were also highlighted.
- **Financial reasons**, with respondents highlighting the importance of decent rates of pay and sufficient wages to pay bills and support families. How wages were paid was also important, with some valuing cash-in-hand payment.
- **Social benefits**, including being able to make new friends, the opportunity to speak to new, diverse groups of people, and good relationships with managers. The opportunity to leave the house and spend time in a positive office environment was highlighted – as was the opportunity to exercise.
- **A sense of purpose**, with work providing an opportunity to feel valued and make a difference – be it through helping people, seeing people progress, or learning new skills.

“I do care work. I have pride in my work, even though it’s low paid. I’m good at my job.”

### Work ethic:

Whilst most people who responded to the survey discussed work as a means to pay the bills and survive, there was a strong work ethic evident in the responses that showed local people as dedicated, resourceful and hard working. Most households work long hours in low paid jobs to stay above the breadline. However, respondents identified training and progression as a central long-term goal – showing that employment is not just about putting food on the table but having a purpose and a pride in an identifiable contribution to society. We spoke to cleaners, taxi drivers and carers who were relatively low paid but incredibly proud of their work and committed to working long hours. They were not demanding more money but keen to develop new skills and work their way to a better role.

### Negatives:

- **Working conditions**, with some respondents reporting conditions that were deemed unsafe or insecure. Things that respondents felt would improve their working conditions

included working fewer hours; longer breaks; a reduction in target-driven work, and more resources.

- **Wages** were also an important issue – with some respondents reporting being paid below minimum wage or not getting sick pay or holiday pay.
- **Lack of progression routes** was highlighted as an important challenge, with respondents perceiving barriers to new skills and training opportunities, career progression and transitioning to positions that were better paid.

### **“There isn’t enough support or opportunity to progress”**

“I only just cover my bills and feel I am not providing enough for my kids”

“I want independence, to buy what I want, money brings enjoyment, opportunity and you meet new people”

“I just want to improve my life

“We don’t get jobs, they see our names... Shame, they are missing talent”

“I worked a night shift; it wasn’t what I studied for, but I had no choice as I had to support my family”

“My qualifications from Somalia don’t work here”

## **Goals**

Many respondents had long-term career goals – but reported how these often felt out of reach. Their aspirations included career advancement, home ownership, self-employment and business expansion, providing new opportunities for families and children, and being a role model for younger generations.

Respondents voiced desires for new career pathways – such as in nursing and healthcare, or accountancy – as well as the desire to retrain or return to education. Getting access to vocational training was cited as a key goal but often felt unobtainable – due to lack of time and lack of funds. Many had to continue working to stay afloat – meaning that any training opportunities risked losing income.

## **Barriers**

46% of respondents in the survey were currently unemployed and **13% of respondents had never worked**. People had a good understanding and were able to speak very clearly about the barriers they were experiencing to getting into work/better work. Respondents identified the following barriers to employment:



**Experiences of racism or bias** were reported as occurring in both overt and covert ways. Respondents highlighted a lack of diversity in the workplace, unconscious bias, and language barriers often creating an atmosphere in which they felt they did not 'fit'. More overt occurrences included discrimination and a lack of recognition of qualifications and expertise leading to highly qualified people working jobs which require limited qualifications.

A **lack of experience in job applications, skills, or qualifications – as well as the wrong 'kind' of experience** were reported by many, which were all exacerbated in a highly competitive job market. This again took the form of a lack of recognition of qualifications from outside the UK when defining 'employability'; as well as problems in learning on the job and/or a lack of references to secure employment.

**The job market** was characterised for many respondents by a lack of vacancies, particularly for jobs local to Lawrence Hill. Respondents described issues in finding the 'right' work or placements – both in terms of skills, aspiration and wages.

Another significant barrier was **childcare difficulties** – with a lack of available, affordable childcare often stopping people from accessing the jobs they want or can do. This was also linked to difficulties finding suitable work hours (including travel time to and from work) to fit around family needs.

"It's very hard to get a job in Lawrence Hill, there are not enough companies or employers"

"There are no jobs in Lawrence Hill, it's all residents and shops"

**"You have to travel out of area to work, there is nothing here, this doesn't work with the school runs"**

"I'm not entitled to childcare costs because of my husband's income, this stops me working, I love working, I have gained so much experience and learnt so much"

"I lost my job because of the pace of my reading"

"I didn't grow up in this country, so I haven't been taught the systems, I don't know how to do job applications"

"I don't understand the job titles or descriptions, they aren't aimed at me"

## Observation – Digital Exclusion

Several respondents reported having difficulty accessing job opportunities that were online. This was due to not having access to a computer at home or not having enough IT knowledge to be able to do tasks such as attach a document to an email or amend a CV. There were respondents who had wanted to apply for entry level jobs at supermarkets and other major retailers but were put off by the complex systems put in place. Some had to undertake various online tests and applications. There was no human interaction or feedback to let them know why they had not been selected or why their application had failed.

Other barriers included: **language issues**, a **lack of understanding of systems** (i.e., in terms of accessing work), **forms of discrimination** against those with learning difficulties or older members of the community, **dyslexia and other learning difficulties**, **family commitments**, or a broader **lack of motivation**.

## Help and support received

35% of the respondents had not received any help or support when looking for work and an additional 12% had relied on family and friends to help them look for work. Several respondents (5%) mentioned support from the Job Centre/Department for Work and Pensions - varying from looking at the jobs board in the Job Centre to being assigned a work coach. 10% had accessed support from voluntary and community sector organisations including Wellspring Settlement's BOOST Finance Project, West of England Works, the Salvation Army, St Paul's Job Centre and ESOL and IT support based in community centres.

"Jobcentre assigned me someone who hasn't helped me yet, they were going to help with a CV or something, I don't really know?"

"I have been out of work for a long time, I would like to have information about work and how companies work."

"I worked as a manufacturing engineer, designing computer parts in Poland, not been able to find the same level "

"There is a demand for experience, how are you supposed to get experience?"

"I need help with pre-settlement status, right to work in the UK, people get deported"

"How do you gain experience if no one will give you a chance?"

## Observation: Holistic support

Conversations with the community have shown that employment support is failing to teach people about how to apply for work, or how to best sell themselves to employers. It is too much about quick fixes and 'doing for' instead of 'doing with'. Many people reported their CV had been done for them by someone at the Job Centre or the National Careers Service. They did not know how to update their CV or how to talk about their skills. Many thought they had no skills, but through conversation around past work experience and interests it was clear that many people did have skills that would make them employable. Support was not long enough or detailed enough, it did not take into account a person's background, long term goals or family situation. Some people preferred to seek support from family around employment support, due to fear of being charged for services or fear of being forced into work that they were not suitable for, or that would not benefit them financially.

## Help and support required

The Community Researchers identified several forms of help and support that local people would like to see provided in the community:

**Language support** – including ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. However, many argued that more needed to be done beyond putting on ESOL classes – including providing more job training in Lawrence Hill.

**Volunteering and work experience opportunities** – including the development of shadowing/mentoring opportunities in particular fields, and the use of partnerships to collaborate and create links across companies and sectors – providing residents with an opportunity to gain on-the-job experience in their desired sector.

**The provision of training opportunities** - specifically linked to work opportunities and on-the-job experience but also opportunities to get to know how companies work, social skills and work etiquette. Training should be funded or, at least, affordable – particularly for those currently in part-time work. The point was made several times by respondents that training must be relevant to a particular field not just generic. A good example was general IT, if people do not have access to computers, they cannot practice the skills in action. A need for a Job Club/Skills Centre in Lawrence Hill was mentioned by several respondents (6%).

**A lack of local jobs?** 85% of the people that Community Researchers spoke to felt there were no job opportunities or employers in Lawrence Hill. In particular, younger people were widely identified as being forgotten. This is a common conception that has been perpetuated locally for years. Others argued that, whilst jobs were available, they were often highly competitive and restrictive. They felt that the job opportunities were mainly retail, with Lidl often mentioned as the area's largest employer. Jobs like cleaning and care work were also suggested as possible options but these were seen to lack opportunities to progress or were poorly-paid. People also felt there was a degree of nepotism in smaller business recruitment.

*"You have to work outside the area if you want security jobs or cleaning."*

*"There are no jobs in Lawrence Hill"*

*"There may be some cleaning and care jobs, but nothing much."*

*"I've noticed over time, the job centre has gone from local area, no jobs fairs or recruitment opportunities for us here."*

*"We have to travel across the city to find work, which can be expensive, time consuming and difficult."*

*"Only Lidl and other shops, different cultures stick to employing their own people."*

**Help to understand the jobs market** - many respondents talked about not understanding how the UK jobs market works. This includes uncertainty about how to translate qualifications from other countries to the UK jobs market and a lack of understanding of many of the job titles and skills needed for such roles – as well as the concept of transferable skills. **Many respondents talked about excluding themselves from opportunities because they didn't feel these were marketed towards them; they felt out of reach; or because there was likely to be significant competition from people who did understand the system.**

**Education around racism and how it affects people** – respondents questioned how employers may view different cultures and how welcome and inclusive employers are in practise. There was also the perception that employers do not see the benefits of a diverse employment pool.

Finally, the provision of **financial support** was also identified as something that was needed in the local community – including help in navigating benefit systems, saving money and access to credit, advice on pensions and earning more, as well as providing broader advice on employee rights and entitlements.

## Conclusions

### What we need from employers

Our findings show that local employers can:

**Seek to expand their recruitment processes to include local people** – this can be done through working with community organisations to recruit directly from services supporting unemployed people.

**Develop ways to be more inclusive** in hiring practices – particularly with relation to identified barriers to employment. This may include developing a way of offering more training and/or the provision flexible working hours around childcare or religious needs.

**Share an understanding of how to work with community organisations** in supporting local people into local jobs and making them sustainable, making employment opportunities visible and relevant to the community.

**Explore new recruitment practices and routes to ensure fair and equal opportunities for progression** – offering processes of progression that are understood by and achievable for Lawrence Hill residents. A key element would be the introduction of human aspects of recruitment – offering dialogue and conversation to those who may be unsure of how an application process works. This can also involve a shared pledge to commit to the fair treatment of workers, including investing in their progression and wellbeing – which will also aid staff retention. Ways of doing this include training opportunities, supervision and mentorship and collaboration with community organisations that can offer mental health and wellbeing support.

## What we offer employers

We are committed to working closely with local employers to develop better ways of supporting sustainable employment in Lawrence Hill. This could include:

**Helping to deliver end to end recruitment** through advertising vacancies within our networks, helping to source skilled individuals and fill gaps in the workforce, and working to make employment opportunities visible and relevant to this community.

**Working with employers to deliver training** as part of recruitment drives. If there are specific workshops or on-the-job training employers would like prospective candidates to complete, we can explore providing them in an accessible, affordable way.

**Assisting with the interview process**, through prepping candidates and providing a member of the interview panel for job interviews.

Offering **in-work support to candidates** to help them to settle into job, whilst liaising with the employer to ensure a smooth start to employment.

Increasing access to **training on equality and diversity**.

## Community Employer Forum

Dialogue and possibilities occur when people meet people. A guiding principle of community development is based on building relationships and creating trust; facilitating spaces of possibilities and opportunity enables us to work together to identify gaps in the work force, build relationships in the community and pool together resources and create real pathways. There is a need for dialogue between residents, community anchors and employers to build trust and understanding and for informed action at a level where it is possible to act in a nuanced way mindful of economic perspectives at community-level. City initiatives tend to be focused on big employers, or the city centre where it is much harder to experiment.

A 'Community Employer Forum' would work more directly with local employers and businesses with facilitation by a community anchor organisation, providing employers with the opportunity to be part of their communities, invest in future work forces and to be part of the journey of the overall community. Connecting this Forum to the knowledge generated by the 'Routes into Community Influence' research project will help build a greater understanding of the barriers faced and support better development of 'into-employment' progression, can match up employment possibilities with local skills, knowledge and expertise and develop other practices, that can be fed into, and built on, by city or region decision-making fora. With the developmental opportunities of Temple Quarter on the doorstep of Lawrence Hill, a Community Employer Forum and Community Employment Research Team could:

Take outputs from the 'Routes into Community Influence' project, and otherwise source data on needs of workers and employees in the Lawrence Hill area to **seed ideas on solutions**, for example collective apprenticeship and trainee programmes to support small businesses.

Arrange **forum meetings around issues and joint solutions** on highlighted barriers to employment – e.g., childcare and caring for others; skill and confidence building; cultures and attitudes to recruitment; equality and diversity issues; working as a self-employed sub-contractor.

Identify and understand barriers, **test and evaluate possible solutions, sharing outcomes with other organisations** appropriately and in a timely way, and campaign as the group considers useful and applicable – in the context of ‘Supply Side’, ‘Infrastructure’ or ‘Demand side’.

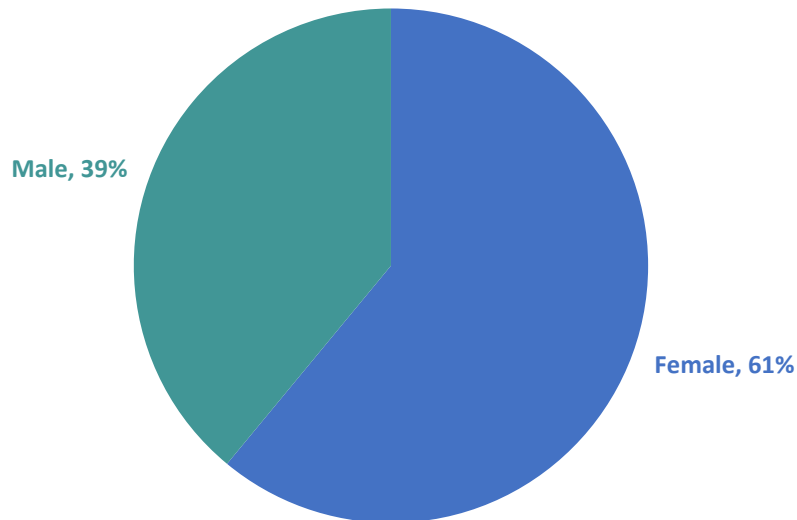
**Understand and promote connections** with other schemes and identify projects elsewhere in Bristol that can be deployed, signposted, or adapted.

The Community Employment Forum will partner with and build on the BOOST Finance Project and West of England Works Programme, striving to create seamless links into training and work opportunities and address barriers that are faced by those seeking to engage in employment but find the systems and processes difficult to understand and work for them.

## Appendix A – Participants

This Appendix presents the demographic data collected from the 54 people living in the Lawrence Hill ward who completed a questionnaire for the 'Routes into Community Influence' project.

**Figure 1 Respondents by gender**



**Figure 2 Respondents by ethnicity**

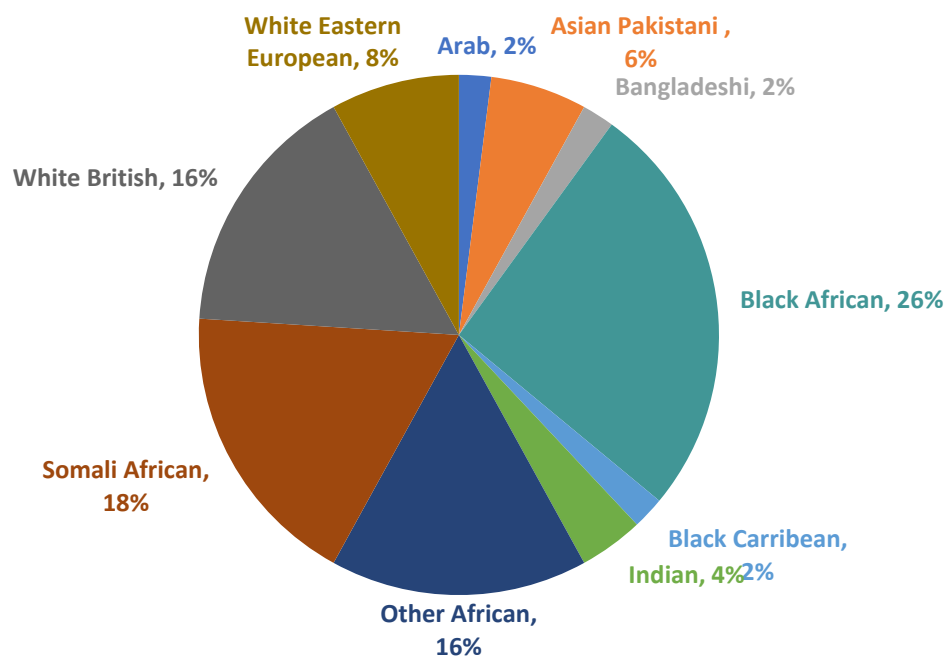


Figure 3 Respondents by age

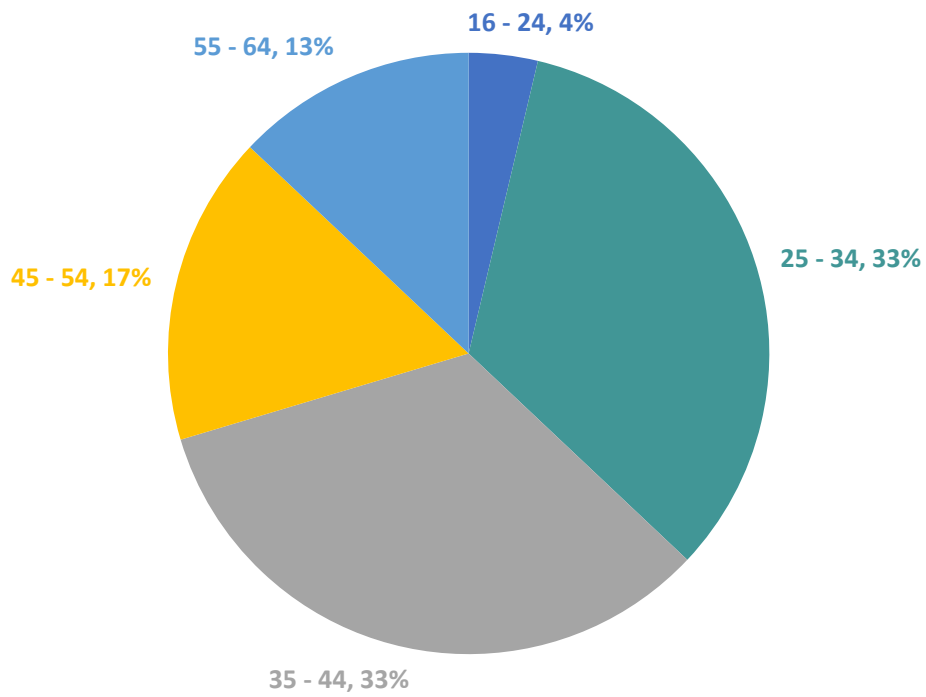


Figure 4 Different languages spoken by respondents

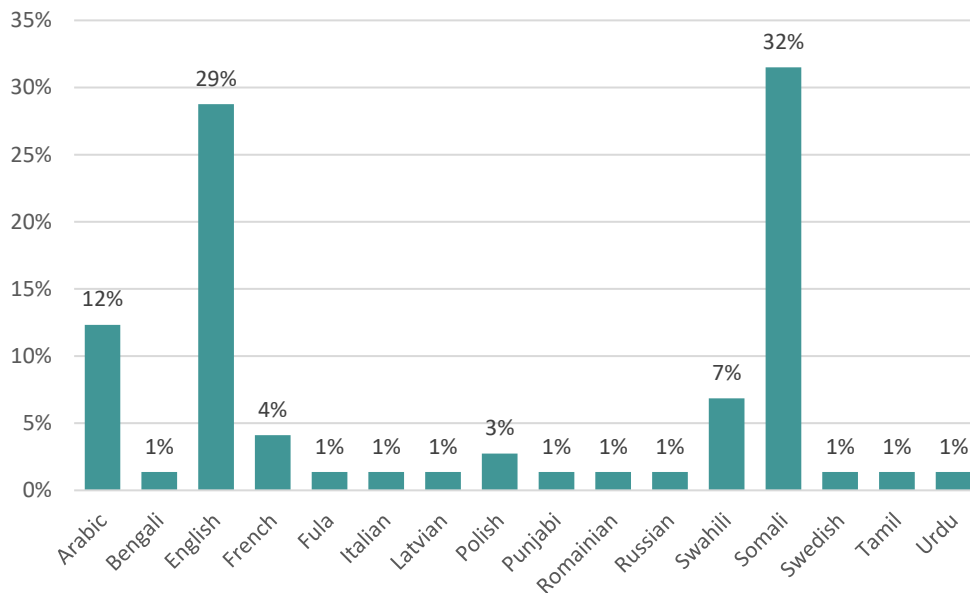




Figure 5 Number of respondents who felt their day-to-day activities were impacted by a health problem or disability in the last 12 months

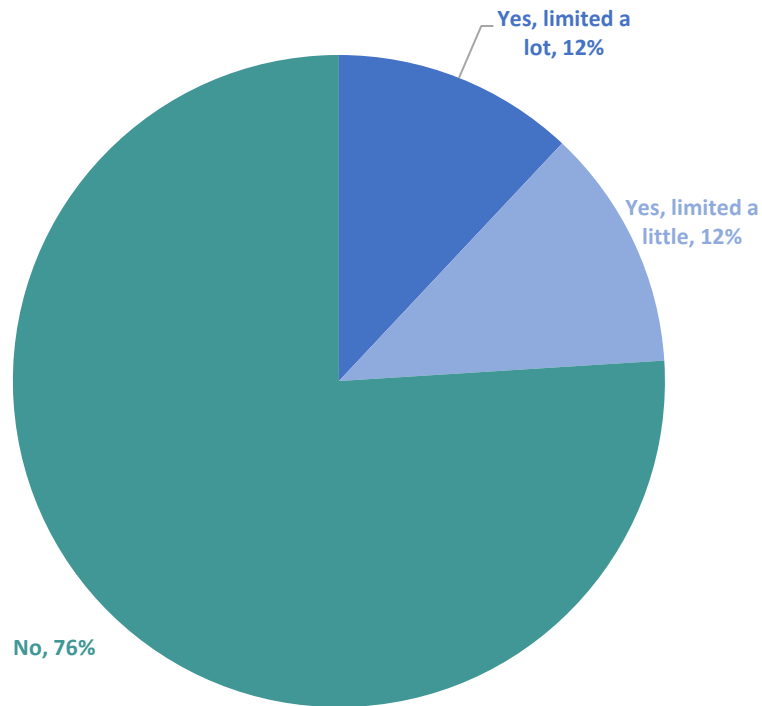


Figure 6 Number of respondents in relation to benefits claimed

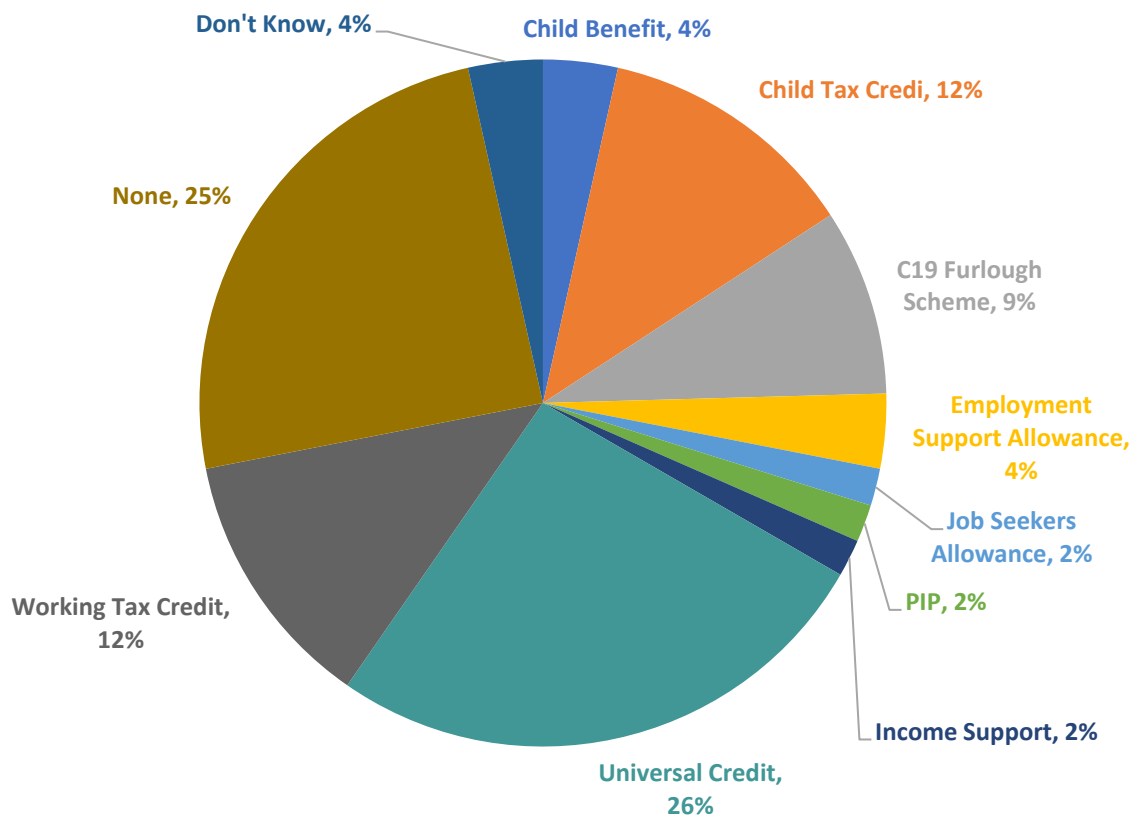


Figure 7 Number of qualifications obtained in the UK and outside the UK

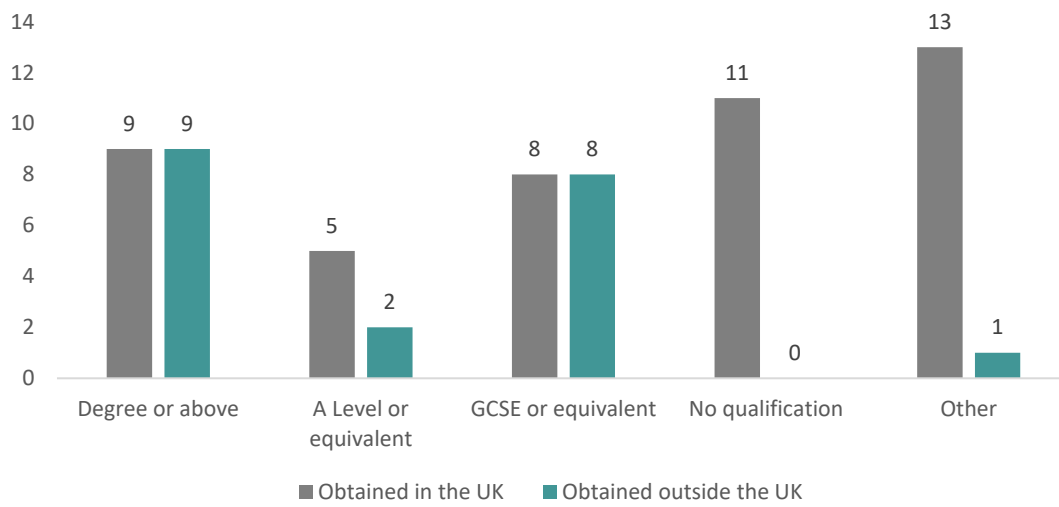


Figure 8 Respondents current living situations

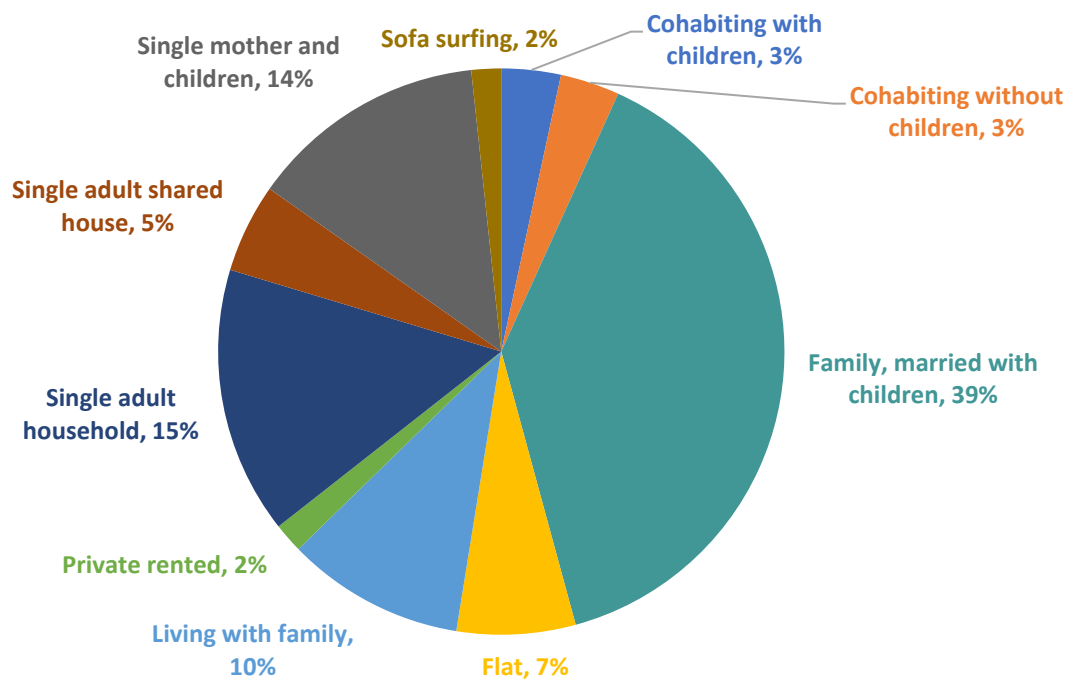
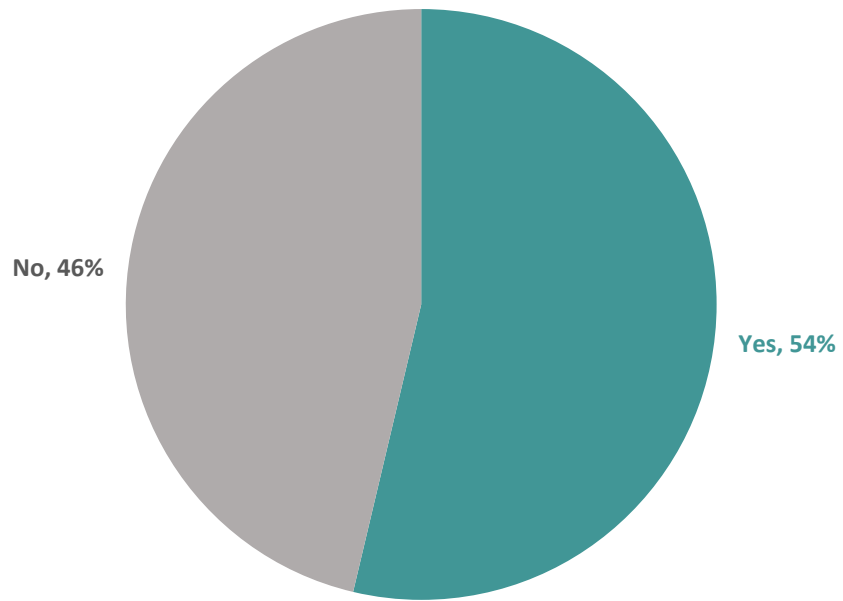


Figure 9 Respondents currently in paid work



## Appendix B – Project Detail and Evaluation

The 'Routes to Community Influence' project involved close collaboration between Wellspring Settlement, Community Researchers from Lawrence Hill ward and the University of Bristol to devise a series of stages that developed and completed a research project. We detail these different stages, including training and collaborative sessions, below:

**Recruitment** - Two 'Taster sessions' were held, one virtually and one in person inviting members of the community that were interested in being involved in a project seeking to understand unemployment/worklessness in the Lawrence Hill area from the perspective of the community. Adverts were sent out using Wellspring Settlement's social media outlets, community contacts and networks and posters/fliers were distributed across the area. The events were held during lockdown, which had an impact on numbers. Potential barriers to attending the groups were discussed and solutions put in place, including childcare, anxiety around expectations and potential lack of access to networks to speak to.

Once a group of six Community Researchers were appointed, we met over a period of several months to devise and complete the research project.

### Session 1 Welcome, Volunteering paperwork and information packs

Session one consisted of introductions and the timeline for the project. We established the aim of this project was to identify the issues in the local area around employment. We contextualised the project in terms of how much development there will be around Lawrence Hill in the next decade and how it is timely to canvass the community on their thoughts about employment. We discussed the aim of finding solutions and planning to spend £5000 towards a possible solution or pilot solution.

We asked ourselves what a research question was. Insights from the Community Researchers were that it was *"A question put to a respondent to ascertain facts. It could be made up of opinions and it had to have an intention. That it was quantitative and qualitative, it needed measurable data. That the title or question should be very clear, and it should have guidelines. It would tell a story and it would understand the community it was being delivered to"*.

### Session 2 including part of session 3 Research, Listening & Ethics

During this session we planned to explore employment barriers to begin focusing our research question and developing what would form the basis for our set of questions to take to the community. As a group we shared our collective knowledge and experience of employment barriers. Sharing stories and examples of our own encounters and those we knew of in the community. As the group is made up of a cross section of the community and culturally diverse, this made for interesting topics and debates around employment and attitudes surrounding employment.

Ed Atkins from the University of Bristol joined us to talk about ethics, giving context to the university's role in the project. Describing what ethics is and how it relates to the work we are doing as part of this project. The exercise Ed brought to the group was about values and defining what our values are as individuals and as a group. We then completed a listening exercise and practiced approaching the community.

### **Session 3 & 4 Asset Mapping & Research Question**

The first thing we did was to feedback from talking to family and friends. Looking at the richness of the data we had gathered, and how it might shape the development of the questionnaire going forward. We also discussed any gaps in demographics, were there groups of the community we might not be able to reach? and how would we make efforts to ensure we managed to speak to those outside of our immediate networks. Groups we identified as being at risk of not being included were, White British working-class men, young adults, Europeans and stay at home mums. We also asked ourselves if it was ok to have gaps? What was the number of people we needed to speak to in order to have enough relevant data to analyse? We agreed we needed to reach at least 60 people within the community to have enough data. We worked to refine our research questions, looking at language and incorporating our agreed values to make the questions relevant and flowing.

### **Session 5 Devising the Questionnaire & Context**

In this session we focused solely on the research questions, how did it feel to ask the question? what was interesting, difficult, useful, not important? etc. We then concentrated on expanding the research questions and why we include or ask certain things, how to order them so they flow, how intense or difficult it might be for some people to answer them. Ed Atkins joined us, and we worked to refine the question one last time with the understanding that this was the last revision before going live. We worked on how we can challenge constructively and present a rationale around why we think something should be included or not. Two members of the group had a very healthy discussion around why some terminologies are important and came to an agreement about how we should ask some specific questions.

### **Session 6 Community Engagement & Research**

The group fed back on trying out the draft questionnaire and practiced the newly revised and final version of the questionnaire. We focused on how this questionnaire made the researchers feel and how it would affect the interviews and looked at how we would manage negative or difficult answers. We also looked at language, colloquialisms, the speed at which people speak, and the difficulty of regional accents.

We practiced the questionnaire in turns with an observer and feedback around how it felt to use the final version. We talked about rephrasing questions if people don't understand. Notes were taken of some of the concerns and the next session was written to meet the needs of the group.

### Session 7 – Preparing for conversations with the community

In this session we role played around how to manage a very difficult, negative and potentially depressing interview. The facilitators were able to use worked experience of these situations, to provide advice and guidance on how to approach this situation. We revisited safeguarding and Wellspring Settlement's policies and procedures. We also revisited signposting and how to offer support to interviewees without overstepping boundaries.

### Session 8 – Out in the community - Research Gathering

As a group we split into two, with a facilitator leading each group. We then went out into the local community, using the local park and the high street. The researchers showed great enthusiasm and confidence when approaching community members.

We managed to reach a good cross section of the community, speaking to a variety of people with different backgrounds. The gaps we identified early on were present and there were people we were not able to reach, purely based on time constraints.

### Session 9 - Research Gathering out in the community

A target of 10 questionnaires per Community Researcher was set, to give a pool of 60 completed questionnaires to analysis.

The group of Researchers had shrunk in size at this point, due to holiday commitments and those self-isolating due to Covid concerns. As such we did not split up during this outreach but stayed together as a group. Interactions with the community were mainly positive and welcomed, part of the reason we managed to engage with so many people positively was that people knew we were from Wellspring Settlement, which has a reputation locally for being invested in bringing opportunities to the area and listening to and supporting local people. It also helped to have Somali speakers in the group, who were able to translate and help people feel at ease.

A Drop-In session at Wellspring Settlement was also advertised for members of the public who wanted to discuss employment issues, and Community Researchers were supported by staff to go out into the community and speak to people.

**Feedback from the Community Researchers:** We received some feedback from the Community Researchers on the process and learning outcomes of the project. The feedback was useful in letting us know how we might approach such collaborations in the future.

### Positives

- The staff delivering the training and coordination of the project were very good at supporting the group. Community Researchers felt they were given good working examples of how to approach members of the public and have conversations.

- Being involved in the project has helped increase confidence and helped those involved feel like they were able to be part of effecting positive change in their community.
- It has offered a taster of potential career aspirations for those involved and helped give experience of research as a career option.
- It was felt that the process was an equal one with everyone having a chance to express views and opinions.

### Negatives

- Some of the Community Researchers were unsettled by the instability of sessions due to Covid impacting on set plans. It was felt that it would have been better to have more notice of changes to the schedule.
- The pace of the sessions felt slow at times and others rushed. A written weekly summary of actions and subject matter would have been helpful.
- Better clarification from the start of the ward boundaries early on in the process, would have enabled the researchers to focus their efforts more.
- There were gaps in community voice, and we were unable to speak to many 16 – 25 year olds.
- More of an incentive for those taking part to give information, could we look at offering vouchers to those completing the questionnaire?



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