
RACE EQUALITY NETWORK EMPOWERMENT EVENT

Delivered by Empowering Minds



INFLUENCE AND CHANGE “TAKING FORWARD YOUR CITY, YOUR VOICE” THURSDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2019

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Bradford CNET, for the partnership in hosting our conferences at their venue, and Bradford partners, voluntary and statutory sector partners who supported the project.

Above all, a big thank you to all of the participants who gave up their valuable time and gave us an insight to the issues faced by the BAME community across different sectors.

And finally, thank you to Rahib and Mubashir for their constant support throughout the project.

Report Author:

Sofia was born in Lancashire but raised and educated in Bradford specializing in (BA Hons) Applied Criminal Justice Studies and has over 18 years' experience working across the public, private, faith, voluntary, education and health sectors. Sofia has been a catalyst in raising awareness, campaigning and developing innovative approaches and strategies around the themes of Education, Social cohesion, integration, safeguarding, young people, women and the Prevent Strategy locally and nationally.

Over the years Sofia has been called upon to speak at public conferences local and national institutes. She has been a voice for communities across the country- addressing and challenges around Racism, Identify and Cohesion, Gender violence and the ideologies and misconceptions attached to these. Her drive and passion shines bright as she works intensively to make a difference locally and nationally. She has been at the forefront of devising models of engagement for faith base institutes, schools, community groups, statutory sector and private sector.

She has also held the role of Secretary for the Shanaz Network, a national Prevent engagement initiative aimed at women and has designed engagement program for a broad range of audiences. Sofia is an experienced professional and specializes in Community engagement, safer communities, citizenship and identity, child sexual exploitation, engagement with young men/women, Prevent, communities, families, practitioners. She has delivered tailor made training courses for Prevent Engagement Officers for various Police Forces on how to engage with women and Muslim communities, Anti-racism strategy's and policy development. Sofia has worked closely with a number of services such as National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), where she has developed resource tools for practitioners around preventing violent extremism, community engagement and tackling radicalizations.

Recently, Sofia has engaged in several media interviews across the UK to highlight key messages on Gender Violence, Safeguarding, Hate Crime, islamophobia, women engagement in tackling Prevent through grass root level engagement. Interviews have included the Security Minister, MP's, senior Police Officers, representatives from BBC departments, Radio 5, BBC Asian Network as well as Directors from a range of services. Sofia has been a key speaker at local and national events empowering men and women to challenge and eradicate key issues from communities e.g. CSE, all forms of extremism and racism.

Sofia is passionate about Safeguarding and Education, creating opportunities and making a difference. providing a platform for young women to enhance and develop their education further a specialist career. Engage, Educate and Inspire young females to know their worth and value. She is enthusiastic about alternative education as well as main stream education young females require to be mentored by women who will support them through their journey of life and education.

Sofia Mahmood, Director

Forward Empowering Minds Consultancy:

“A closed mind has no space for Knowledge. The mind is a powerful tool and can never be unlocked without the right education, where that knowledge comes from is down to what individuals are exposed to. it can enslave us or empower us. Ideologies and misconceptions can create an animosity which can only be cleared with education and sharing practise. You cannot unlock the mind without the right knowledge hence knowledge is the key, mind is the lock. Knowledge empowers you as knowledge is the life of the mind”

Sofia Mahmood, Director

1. Introduction

This evaluation summarises the finding of “Your City, Your Voice” BAME female adults’ event.

Focusing on females from BAME backgrounds. BAME women’s empowerment and engagement.

Future Leaders programme will undertake:

Workshops will empower women to take initiative and create change for the District of Bradford. Women and young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities will develop the skills and aptitude to influence key decisions made in Bradford’s public, private and voluntary sectors including; better health, housing, employment, education and other services in the city.

Workshop outline:

Empowerment, motivational, inspirational to build confidence and become voices for the BAME community.

2. Recruitment Process

Women were recruited from across the Bradford district. A poster was designed which was:

- Emailed to partner organisations within the community voluntary and statutory sector
- Posted on twitter and LinkedIn- which was re tweeted and shared by partners
- Shared via WhatsApp
- Messaged to individual adults
- Bradford University
- CNET
- Bradford Council

Social media contributed heavily to this recruitment. The poster and brief were emailed out to partner organisations including a voluntary organization, CNET, who supported with the recruitment, circulated the email to their contacts and endorsed the event.



3. Conference

The conference was held on 19th September 2019 from ten in the morning to three in the afternoon at CNet Bradford. Twelve women were invited and seven attended the conference. The participants represented different ethnicities and backgrounds with some representing council workers, parents, mental health practitioners, sports and community members.

Throughout the day a range of workshops were delivered exploring:

- Bradford BAME breakdown
- Identity
- Political agenda, looking at local and national issues
- Government and Parliament
- Your visions for the district
- Barriers, institutional racism and racial discrimination
- Leader and activist
- Cycle of change
- Motivation and empowerment

4. Observations

Discussions raised candid concerns, with some feeling that institutional racism is still prevalent. For instance, one lady said a family member of hers always dreamt of joining the West Yorkshire Police. His family was supportive from the initial application process despite it being a drastic cut in his salary. Once he joined, West Yorkshire Police, he left after eighteen months. His experience was extremely disheartening because he would receive racist comments from fellow police colleagues. The other officers believed him to be unqualified and stated that he was only admitted into the police force to fulfil the ethnic quota, not based on merit. After this ordeal, the young man left and said it was the worst decision he made in his life.

Another participant explained how her child hurt his hand in secondary school. The head of year escorted him to reception and said, “You do know we are going to have to explain to your mum what has happened?”. To this her child replied, “Yes, I know, I will tell her”. The head of year remarked, “Will she be able to understand what I will be talking to her about?”. Our participant was left aghast because the head of year already had a prejudice, she had judged the mother’s understanding based on her child’s skin colour.

The ladies collectively discussed what the root cause is of institutional racism and prejudice. They concluded that some people are ignorant and want to remain in their current mentality, whereas some people are open minded and willing to change their perspective.

DISCUSSION: WHAT ISSUES ARE THERE IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION/ADVICE?

Answers:

1. A lady from the Bangladeshi community felt there are internal barriers within the Bangladeshi community. She explained how she faced challenges within her own Bangladeshi community when she arrived in Bradford from Bedfordshire. Some

individuals did not want to mix with her because she came from a different background. However, she is working on this and trying to get the Bangladeshi community to mix by having group activities where everyone is included.



Neena Punnu @Pun... · 19/09/2019
Gr8 conference with amazing women (wow) funded by Race Equality Network #YourCityYourVoice 4 women by women of #EmpoweringMinds #bradfordforeveryone @BfdForEveryone @sofiaempowering Loving listening 2 powerful stories/ experiences its actually inspirational



2. Another lady went on to say that she would like to be an individual and not be labelled. It has been difficult for her to be where she is now mentally after fighting depression and anxiety. It was frustrating being a component of these illnesses and being told how to behave. Other ladies acknowledged hearing her speak about her mental health at a previous event (Police Summer Camp) and how powerful it was for young people and adults to attend these events.

Another issue she faces is being a female in a male dominated field. Upon becoming manager, other managers told her she would be unsuccessful in this role because she was a woman. Their reasoning was that women make decisions based on emotional sentiments and not logic. However, this lady observed that her male cohorts were making more decisions based on emotional sentiment more so than herself. She described how women were doers and go getters who could multi task. She challenged some of the senior managers within karate and asked them how they arrived at the decisions they made. She wants to make a difference and show that Asian women can be karate instructors.

Her vision is to set up self-defence classes for women, so they know how to protect themselves. Due to her Asian background, Asian women will feel comfortable with her. There are so many ways she can achieve this goal; however, she needs support from others. Furthermore, after multiple attempts of seeking help from others, she has encountered barriers where the work is not valued and respected. She knows that once community members stop mixing culture with religion, karate will be more accessible to Asian women.

3. Another young lady who was initially shy and nervous gradually got involved and contributed to this question. Her response was that she would just advise everyone to have basic respect for BAME woman. She went on to explain how she had seen an incident in Bradford City Centre when she was waiting for the bus. She overheard a little conversation between a White British man and a Pakistani male. The Pakistani male had asked to borrow a lighter and the White British male refused. When asked why he refused, he responded with, "I voted to leave so what are you still doing here?". This young lady questioned the White British male and asked him if he spoke to everybody in that way as she is also Pakistani. His response was very hesitant, she was proud that she challenged his behaviour there and then. Consequently, she felt the sheer frustration is that you are always going to be boxed up and people look at your skin colour. Racism is more rampant, and you think people do not know how it feels to be a minority, you see most white people at the top, so you just accept it and don't even know how you could challenge it. You just sit back and accept, but now I think to myself why should? I too have a voice, and this should be used respectfully. I am willing to help where I can, but it is just about having support and guidance. But what can you do when your identity plays such a big part in how people behave towards you?

4. A mental health practitioner went on to say how she had enjoyed listening to everybody's experiences and journeys. She was passionate about promoting mental health positively, raising awareness and educating the community. She explained how working within mental health she had seen a lot of stigma attached to mental health and a lot of judgmental issues especially within BAME women. She explained how she has found that to this day people do not recognise depression as an illness, they think it is just a way of life you deal with, post-natal depression you will just get over it, if it is bereavement, you will get over it. People do not understand the emotional rollercoaster you are on and the regular relapses people face.

She identified that even medical practitioners were not using other therapeutic models and were solely prescribing anti-depressants. Other participants strongly agreed with this statement, some had experienced it first-hand. She elaborated on her experience in coming from Leeds to work in Keighley and observed the work environment culture was still set in pre-dated ideas. These ideas need to be challenged. As a practitioner who understands the community and subject, she can help with so much and reach out to many communities. We

cannot shy away from these topics; we know they are there, but the barriers are there too. You try to get together and then the support is not there, whether that be funding or support, you just give up. Most of the community leaders are men, we still have the stigma that women cannot be leaders and if she wants to be a leader then she is “Western or Modern,” even if this is done in a respectful way. When you look at us, we are getting it from every angle, where is our support?

5. A lady had changed religion to be with the man she wanted to marry. She had the vision and advice that before we look at anyone, we need to see each other as humans, respect each other and accept everyone for who they are. The challenges she faced within her community and her husband’s community were hard, so she took it upon herself to challenge these and make sure people took time to understand. Simple things like names still play a barrier in how people perceive her. For example, having an Indian name and a Pakistani name, she feels she needs to justify herself to people. She wants to break these barriers and have more women stepping out and challenging stereotypes and prejudices. Additionally, she wants BAME women making their mark in senior positions. She went on to say “We have so many issues in our communities; drugs, CSE, identity, depression, reckless driving, anti-social behaviour. But these happen in all communities, this is not just one, as a district we need to challenge this and not label one community. By labelling one community, we are not dealing with the problems, we need to stop making excuses for communities- these are real problems and we need to all work together to deal with these. We must take responsibility.



GROUP DISCUSSION: THE GROUP WERE GIVEN A PICTURE STORY TO LOOK AT HOW CERTAIN QUESTIONS WERE BEING ASKED TO A WHITE INDIVIDUAL AND AN INDIVIDUAL OF COLOUR AND HOW THEY FELT, THEIR RESPONSE WAS:

QUESTIONS



- Blood Boil
- Discrimination
- Disgusted
- Offended
- Angry
- Demeaning

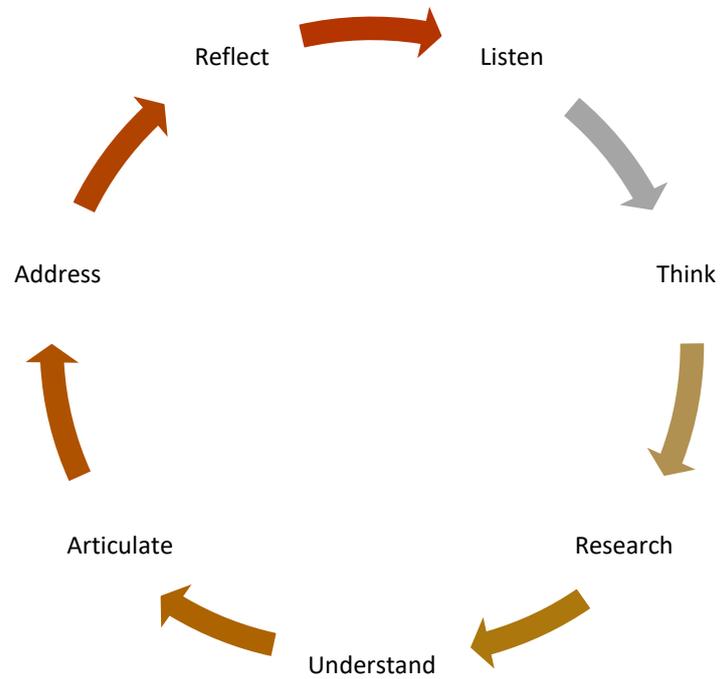
The group felt an array of emotions. Some women were able to relate past experiences to the ones displayed in the pictures, and others were shocked by the reality of the instant barriers BAME women face due to their appearance.

Why do people have to presume things and just look at us and think they know everything? Why should someone be labelled due to the colour of their skin? It is the same question but look how it is asked to a non BAME person.

We live in the 21st Century, why and how are these things being allowed to happen? We understand there has been a change in generations and maybe now people understand

more BAME people are working, getting married later, pursuing education and more. Yet people still stereotype, it has not gone away. It is down to us to educate people. We can get angry and just accept, but by being quiet what will we achieve? Sometimes it is hard to challenge because you do not know how the other person will react, will they think you are being rude? Then you get so annoyed with the constant assumptions and people being smart- is it smart? We need to see more BAME women in senior positions, however when you have stereotypes and prejudices like the above then how can this be challenged?

Empowering Minds - Cycle of Change Model ©



Methods of engagements, challenges discussed through our cycle of change model. Addressing issues at grass roots through to strategic levels.

Exit strategy:

Develop talent further by establishing a programme of learning through shadowing, mentoring and work placements in line with other successful programmes such as Common Purpose or the Advocacy Academy.

You Retweeted



Neena Punnu @PunnuNe... · 19/09/2019

18years of learning into the cycle of change [#YourCityYourVoice](#) [#EmpoweringMinds](#) connecting all different cultures & communities [#bradfordforeveryone](#) [#Bradford2025](#) [#realtalk](#) [@sofiaempowering](#) Bringing collective voices together [#StrongerCommunitiesTogether](#)



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Appendices 1: Feedback

What did you expect from the conference?

Meet new people

Learn about the work

What are you taking away from the conference?

- Inspirational, confidence, empowering
- Loved listening to true stories and experiences
- Learning some in-depth facts on everyone's opinion on diversity and wellbeing
- Feel empowered and confident to be able to try and challenge issues
- Can see a good network of people that want the same and work towards change
- The sad reality of the world we live in
- Networking
- To be articulate and factual, shared knowledge, empowering
- Open up get your voice heard and help others get involved
- Don't let people judge you or put you down

What will you do when you go back?

- Challenge services
- Loved the social transformer which I will use and spread to others.
- Get Bangladeshi community involved
- Equality, very informative and helpful information, inclusive discussion

Hi Sofia,

Thank you for inviting me to the BAME conference yesterday. I found it very informative, empowering and a confidence booster. I know that I will be using the skills picked up yesterday through my day to day activities when meeting with people or in gatherings.

It was a fun, relaxed atmosphere with a good mix of very talented and passionate lovely ladies. A good mix of people with the same kind of ideas, thoughts and end goal.

To be honest I didn't know what to expect and what I was going to learn from attending but I am pleased I did. The skills learned from the activities will be helpful within the circles I am a part of. Especially when having to challenge people in difficult situations to get your point across.

I think the most important points for me that did come out of this is the fact that if you want to see a change you need to be the change, (at least try to make a change) and most importantly be proud of who you are and what you stand for.

Thanks again.

