

LONDON

RACE EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT BRIEFING

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Editorial

In this issue of the *Race Equality in Employment Briefing* for London, we focus on some of the outcomes from one of our estate focused work we have recently conducted.

The starting point for our work is set against the continuing economic uncertainty and job losses that continue to show a significant employment gap (i.e. 13.8%) between white and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people. This gap also has other knock-on implications, such as, for example, the high number of BME claiming out of work benefits. The number of BME claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in London, for example, represent 50% of all claimants with variations in many boroughs ranging from 50% to 68%, as is the case in Newham¹.

BME communities in London, therefore, continue to experience hardship despite the overall welcomed national and regional shifts in the unemployment rate (nationally, down to 7.9% from 8.1% and in London no change at 8.9% on the previous quarter)². These are challenging times for everyone concerned; and it is against this backdrop that this Briefing is to be read.

What follows is a summary of our published report³ based on work undertaken on the Aylesbury estate, London Borough of Southwark, between March and June 2012. Work on the estate by those who lent their voices to an understanding of the dynamics on the estate is still ongoing. Our role was to try to give vent to some of those voices that are at the sharpest end of the economic down turn⁴.

¹ Labour Force Survey, ONS, cited on LSEO, October 2012 (www.lseo.org.uk)

² Labour Force Survey, ONS, op cit

³ The *Voice* newspaper carried an article on this report as well as other media outlets including the BBC

⁴ The full report can be downloaded from the BTEG website: www.bteg.co.uk

The London Borough of Southwark – an overview

The London Borough of Southwark is made up of eight very distinctive urban neighbourhoods that extend along the river Thames and down into South East London. Southwark is one of the Inner City Boroughs situated to the south of the River Thames, sharing common borders with Lewisham to its eastern aspect and Lambeth to the west.

Southwark is the second most deprived borough in London with an employment rate significantly below the London average: 62.8% compared to the London rate of 72%⁵).

Based on the GLA *Round Ethnic Group Projections (2007)*⁶ report and the ONS *mid-year estimates (2007)* nearly two-thirds (63%) of Southwark's population is said to be White. The broad classification of the Black ethnic population accounts for just over a quarter (27%) of Southwark's population, with Black Africans accounting for 16%.

The Aylesbury estate: work-in progress

Built in the 1960s and 1970s, the Aylesbury estate is situated to the east of Walworth Road and north of Burgess Park, and consists of 2,758 dwellings accommodating over 7,500 families, with 17% privately owned through right to buy scheme and only 2% of dwellings are houses. The current regeneration plan aims to transform the Aylesbury over a 20 years period to provide for a vibrant community living in high quality homes, parks and open spaces, excellent public transport and a wide range of facilities⁷.

The Aylesbury:

- is home to approximately 68% are from BME compared to 48% across the ward;
- It is an estate with multiple problems, within an area identified as being in the worst 10% of crime hotspot.⁸
- The key out of work benefit claimant statistics for the Aylesbury (Faraday Ward) show that whilst progress has been made, the Aylesbury still has a higher than borough average rate of worklessness (i.e. employment rate on the estate stands at 54.9% compared to the borough average of 62.8; unemployment rate is 16.3% compared to the Borough rate of 10.8%)⁹.

Against this backdrop, with respect to the plight of BME groups, we sought answers to two key questions:

⁵ NOMIS, March 2012

⁶ The GLA PLP High and PLP Low 2007

⁷ See Plans on www.creationtrust.org.uk

⁸ See Violent Crime Strategy, 2010, Southwark Council

⁹ Nomis, March 2012

1. *To what extent are BME groups being supported to gain employment and/or employment skills? And*
2. *To what extent are policies and strategies making a difference?'*

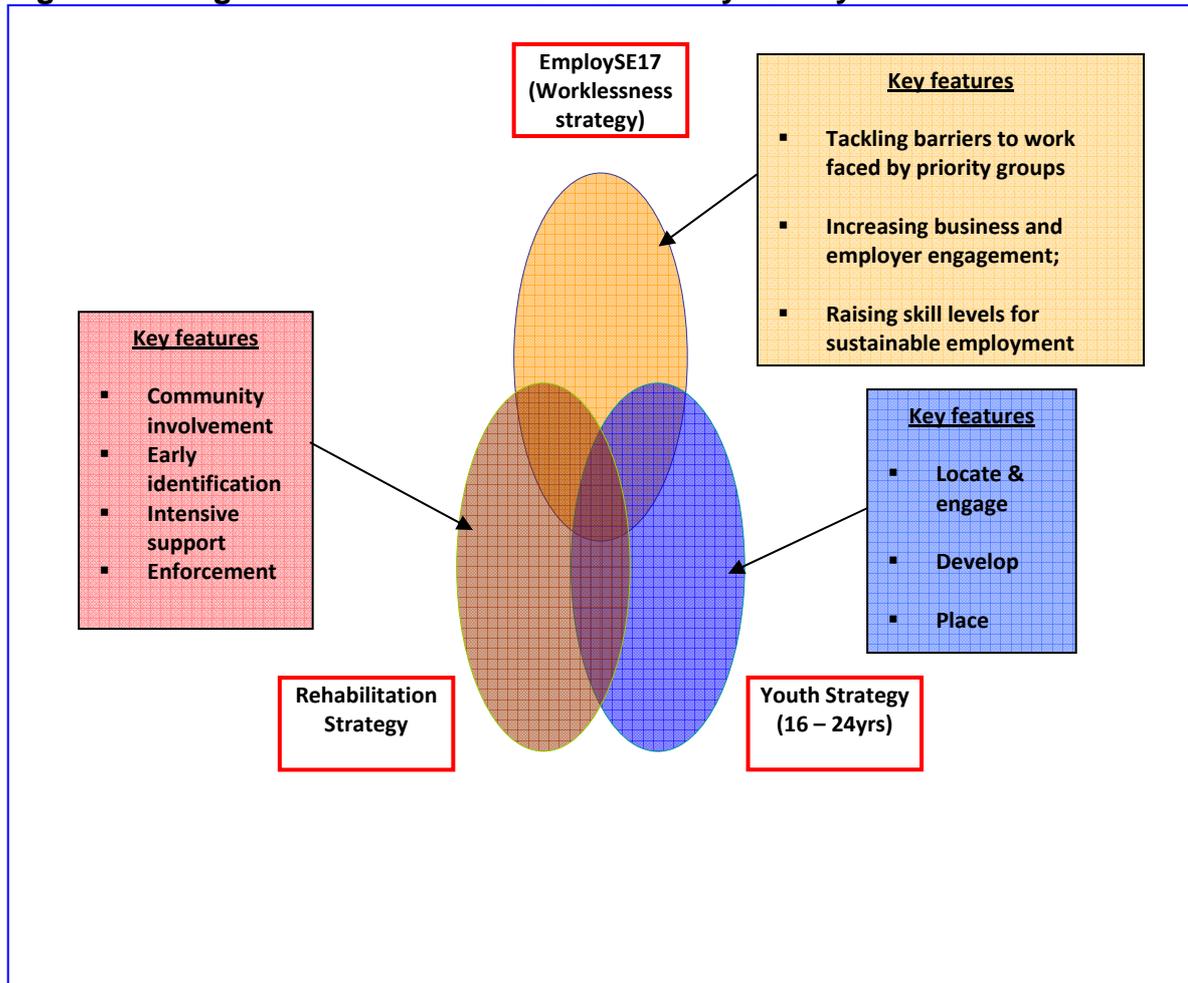
To what extent are BME groups being supported to gain employment and/or employment skills?

Based on our interviews and survey responses (N = 41), the following best reflected the sorts of support that job seekers felt they needed, and with respect to provisions such as the Aylesbury Information, Advice and Guidance (AIAG) service and Southwark Works, many felt they were receiving support to get back into employment. However, they also felt that more could be done in some areas of work on the estate and more broadly across the borough.

Some pointed to the fact that though the 16 – 18yrs NEET profile across the borough was relatively low at 7.2% compared to the London average of 6%, it nevertheless hid the greater concern with respect to the number of those who were *Not known* (i.e. twice the size of the NEET numbers). The concern is that these young people become “*lost in the system if they cannot be identified*” and so become “*ghosts and disappear within communities and remain there until they re-appear as JSA claimants at 18yrs*” which then adds further to the wider 16 – 24yrs NEET situation (22%).

Based on our interviews with key personnel in the Children’s Services Department, there was little evidence of targeted work taking place with those who are ‘ghosting’ and who are at risk of becoming long term unemployed. In Southwark the majority of young people who find themselves in this position are BME. This suggests a more targeted intervention approach could reduce the incidence and level of not known and so lessen the likelihood of adding to the JSA pool as they become ghost for at least 18mths post compulsory education.

Support to the 18yrs and over unemployed highlighted that the work of the AIAG, Elephant Jobs and Southwark Works, for example, were provisions that the unemployed thought provided valuable support. In particular many pointed to receiving direct support, either in the form of drop-in- advice and guidance or in job search and CV writing, as well as specific training such as ICT and communication skills. Despite this, many commented on the problems associated with public transport and travel arrangements as barriers. Funding and resourcing these provisions will affect the extent to which many of these provisions remain a feature of the worklessness strategy for the estate (see Fig 1).

Fig 1: Tackling barriers to worklessness: the Aylesbury estate model

Some jobseekers identified actions that they felt would increase their prospect. These included:

1. Providing better careers information and advice about different sectors. For some “...*Jobcentre Plus staff know little especially when dealing with professionals.*”
2. For the long-term unemployed, training opportunities, held in the mornings to encourage the habit of getting up to do something, with opportunities to address their health and well-being. As one respondent explained, “...*there is a lack of people who can understand and tackle your emotional and psychological problems. This is a key barrier in finding a job.*”
3. Basic computer training. As one respondent stated “...*I know what I'm doing but while attending [local provider name removed] roughly 75% of the people on the course didn't know how to use a computer. The Centre had computers with no software. We therefore need 'CREDIBLE TRAINING'.*”

4. Apprenticeships and work trials: “...providing training and encouragement into employment”.

To what extent are the policies and strategies making a difference?

Arising from our case study there are features that we are concerned with that gives us cause for concern with respect to equalities issues. They are:

- Despite the obvious recognition within the council’s economic policy of prioritising BME groups, there appear to be very little direct evidence of robust monitoring taking place with respect to engagement of this priority group and if this existed, there were no publically available evidence of direct analysis of how monitoring informed practice especially in relation to re-focusing of resources and support. The majority of the visitors to the Aylesbury AIAG, the Learning Centre more generally and Southwark Works, for example are BME and, with the exception of the AIAG provision, it was not possible to obtain any data on take up.
- While the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) outlined some of the principal concerns regarding the context against which the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) and the other strategies were developed, the Action Plans that followed were devoid of direct emphasis on what support would be put in place to overcome some of the specific barriers identified in the EqIA with regards to BME. In other words, it was difficult to see how rhetoric and practice were aligned and therefore unsure of the effectiveness. All targets within the EDS Action Plan were ‘generic’ and all-encompassing which made it difficult to determine the extent to which any particular initiative or programme was having an effect and as such determine relevance of the policy approach and direction. This in turn raises the question as to whether these initiatives and programmes are likely to benefit or support BME groups.
- There is a need for synergy between and across a number of key policy themes around economic development. It was unclear the extent to which evaluation were being undertaken as a whole rather than as ‘bits’ and ‘moments’ within activity domains with the attendant possibility of tangential and spurious links being made as to their overall effectiveness in meeting the expressed aims of the strategy.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Jobseekers reported a wide range of factors affecting their ability to gain employment. In brief, they are:

1. *New Enterprise Allowance*: Disappointingly, only two of the 41 individuals contacted indicated an awareness of the government’s National Employment Allowance (NEA) scheme. One NEA participant

stated that it is "...*hard work but it's about the mentality and motivation of the individual*". However, many jobseekers were interested in starting their own business but lacked the knowledge of what this would entail. There was also a certain amount of apprehension about taking this route.

2. *Services for the unemployed*: The services provided by the AIAG, Elephant Jobs and Southwark Works for the unemployed were seen as valuable. Funding and resourcing these services will remain a challenge but they should remain a feature of the worklessness support infrastructure on the estate.
3. *Barriers to work*: Arising from this small study there are some emerging issues to highlight. Generally respondents felt "...*getting through the doors*" is a particular problem for them, while others commented on "...*experience, qualifications and gaps in CV*" as being barriers to overcome in trying to secure employment. Some said their age is an issue in finding employment. For others, especially those regarded as 'newly arrived migrants', the key issues are:
 - "...*lack of funding/grants for re-training*"
 - "...*policies do not encourage new refugees to engage in work and access to funded training*"
 - "...*having no work experience in the UK*"
4. *Ethnic monitoring and analysis*: Despite the council's recognition of the impact of unemployment on BAME groups, there is not much evidence of robust monitoring taking place in relation to this priority group. While we recognise that there are no simple solutions we do, however, feel there is a need to move away from an '*ethnic neutral*' approach to service design and delivery.
5. *Diversity issues*: We found a low number of South Asians accessing the employment/skills centres but this might reflect their 4% profile in the ward. In relation to age, the number of 25-49 year old unemployed men and women on the Aylesbury estate appears higher than for those who are between 16-24yrs. The majority of visitors using the AIAG, Elephant Jobs and Southwark Works were over 25 years.

Race Equality in Employment (London) Briefings

BTEG's *Race and Equality in Employment (London) Briefing* is for all those whose work focuses on employing people, supporting them into employment or creating jobs. Supported by the *Trust for London*, the *Briefings* aim to show how London's BME communities are faring in the labour market. Each *Briefing* brings the latest figures on employment, unemployment and claimant rates; keeping you up to date with the labour market trends impacting on London's BME population and so help those working for a more inclusive and productive society the opportunity to identify best practice as well as pointers to what actions might be needed in local areas.

We welcome your comments on the issues presented in this *Briefing*. We are keen to include examples of good practice in promoting race equality in employment, so would particularly like to hear from you. For all enquiries about the Race Equality in Employment Briefing, please contact Karl Murray, Head of Employment and Research, Tel: 020 7843 6133 or email: karl@bteg.co.uk

The *Briefing* is FREE and to receive your copy each month please go to the '**Newsletter sign up**' box on the BTEG home page, where you will be able to register your details: www.bteg.co.uk

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