

Homecoming Project:

an account of interviews with black, neurodivergent individuals living and/or working in Lambeth

Authors

Dawn Cameron and Derrick Armstrong

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Diverse
creative

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research | act | evaluate
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TWO Foreword

The Diverse Creative CIC is a disability support hub that focuses on eradicating the stigma associated with persons with disability by raising awareness among individuals and local community organisations with curated programmes and empowering messaging. The Diverse Creative CIC commissioned this report which Black Thrive has kindly sponsored as a part of an employment project. The project put forward by The Diverse Creative CIC is known as The Homecoming project, a hybrid programme focusing on Black people with long term health conditions with a primary focus on Lambeth residents. The programme was broken down into three key areas:

- A 6-week live training programme including 1-2-1 coaching sessions, psychometric testing, dyslexia screenings, and relevant career training sessions taught by leading industry experts, aiming to give this population the skills they need to thrive in the workplace.
- This report is to be used as a support tool for black disabled employees, their allies and organisations to improve the experiences of their employees facing various health challenges.
- An online network so that the participants can continue to build community and be supported throughout the process.

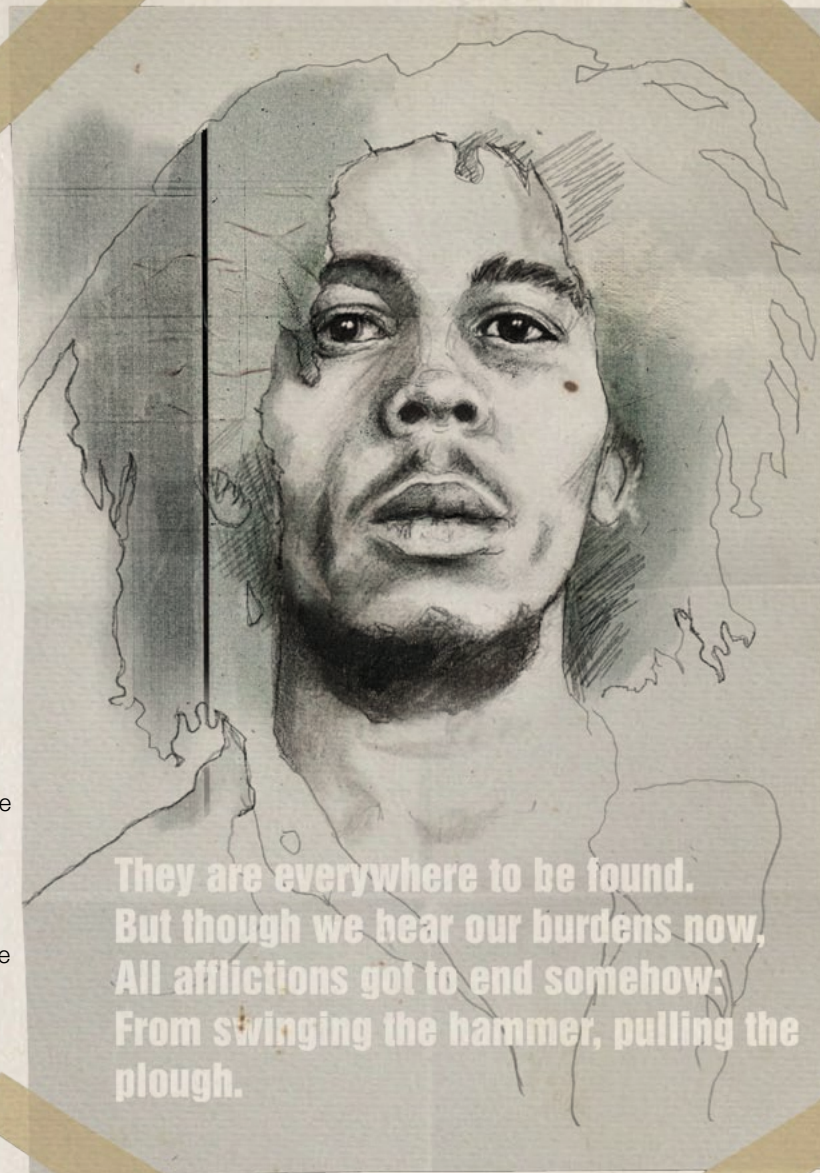
Semi structured interviews were conducted by lead researcher, Tumi Sotire, himself a leading voice in the black neurodivergent community. The voices of black disabled people are often not heard both within the black community and the neurodivergent community in the UK. The challenges and unique barriers black people encounter in the workplace compounded with the obstacles of the neurodivergent community suggest that the unique experiences of the black neurodivergent individual work remain worthy of further exploration. This research reinforces the importance of intersectionality, highlighting that black neurodivergent experiences in the workplace are often unheard. Consequently, we hope that readers of this thought-provoking report will gain an increased awareness of the experiences of the black neurodivergent community in Lambeth and across the UK and how to optimise the experiences of black neurodivergent in the workplace.

We collaborated with consultants, Armstrong Cameron LLP in conducting the research. We worked together on designing methods, and they analysed the interviews and compiled the write up of the report.

The Diverse Creative CIC was birthed in response to years of rejection as a black neurodivergent woman trying to navigate society; because of my lived experience, the organisation's foundation is based on strength and empowering those that society stripped of their voices because they operated differently. The Homecoming Project was curated via the various lenses of those that have the experience of sinking with nowhere to turn as we continue to champion change in this space. We understand that change can only really come in numbers by those healed and ready to carry the load until another builds up enough confidence to begin their journey. This report has allowed us to create a legacy for the Homecoming project and enable us to support and reach those who may have once felt isolated. You will notice throughout the report a Bob Marley theme; this is intentional and not because he was neurodivergent but because he decided to be a forever student; he was curious enough to teach himself how to read and write and achieve global success by spreading positive messages and empowering the people with his music. While they are not two of the same at The Diverse Creative CIC, we choose to channel very similar energy to support our participants; from a place of empowerment, strength and positivity, but more than that, by making the decision to begin!

We hope you enjoy what we have uncovered, and feel free to share this report with others that may find value and benefit from these pages.

Remi Ray
Founder and Director, The Diverse Creative CIC



A glossary of terms

Throughout this report, reference is made to neurodivergence and to three specific learning differences which fall within the umbrella term. These are:

- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia

The brief definitions of key terms (below) are not definitive. Understandings and interpretations evolve over time. Readers should consider the following an invitation for further reading and conversation.

Neurodiversity: The term was coined in the 1990s by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, who describes it as a political rather than a scientific term. Writing in 2020 she stated that neurodiversity:

refers specifically to the limitless variability of human cognition and the uniqueness of each human mind was coined, I believe, by myself in the 1990s, as a political term to argue for the importance of including all neurotypes for a thriving human society.

The term, she explains, names an indisputable fact about our planet, that no two human minds are exactly alike and uses it to name a paradigm for social change.

In short, neurodiversity is not a diagnosis. It is, rather, an acknowledgement of cognitive variability.

Neurodivergence, on the other hand, is cognitive functioning which is not considered 'typical'. This includes but is not limited to learning differences such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, AD(H)D, autism and dyscalcula. The learning differences represented in this research are: AD(H)D, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD[H]D) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects the nervous system, including the brain, during development from childhood to adulthood. People with the condition may experience impulsivity, distractedness and difficulty following instructions and completing tasks. Males are three times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than females.

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty which primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It can also include challenges with information processing, short term memory and timekeeping. Though dyslexia affects 10% of the population, they are disproportionately likely to be unemployed; 22% of unemployed people are thought to be dyslexic.

Dyspraxia is a specific learning difficulty affecting coordination, movement, balance and organisation abilities. This neurodivergence often exhibits similar characteristics to other neurodivergent conditions, particularly Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD, particularly in the areas of short-term memory, concentration, and social interaction.

AD(H)D is a neurological condition affecting the nervous system, including the brain, from childhood to adulthood. It has impacts particularly in the areas of short-term memory, concentration and social interaction. Males are twice as likely to receive a diagnosis of dyspraxia than females.

they are
everywhere to be
found. But though
we bear our
burdens now, All
afflictions go to
end somehow.
From swinging the
hammer, pulling the
plough

Background & context

This research project was initiated and led by *The Diverse Creative CIC*. Founded in 2017 by a black entrepreneur who herself received a diagnosis of dyslexia at the age of 19, *The Diverse Creative* works to support individuals and employers in overcoming the additional barriers and obstacles encountered by disabled people in employment and/or seeking employment. Its core areas of work are:

- Dyslexia & ADHD screening services
- Official Dyslexia Assessments
- Consultation service for organisations
- Training service for organisations
- One to one support for individuals
- Coaching packages for individuals and organisations
- Workshops for the local community
- Business programmes for disabled entrepreneurs
- Personal Finance programmes for individuals
- Employment support for individuals
- Student empowerment support and guidance.

This piece of focused research was carried out as part of a wider project – *The Homecoming Project* – delivered by *The Diverse Creative CIC*. Funded by Lambeth-based *Black Thrive*, the programme sought to develop and deliver bespoke support to black disabled people living and/or working in Lambeth, enabling them to access employment. The wider project was delivered by black professionals with decades of experience in the field. It comprised the following elements:

- Access to a bespoke training programme;
- Individual coaching;
- Psychometric testing and dyslexia screening;
- Post programme online support;
- Access to resources, tools and masterclasses.
- Access to qualitative data focusing on disabled employees.

The research element of the project (whose outcomes are summarised in this report) originally aimed to:

- Illuminate the lived employment experiences of black disabled people;
- Uncover the ways in which disability intersects with issues of 'race' to explain individuals' experiences of employment and progression in the workplace;
- Amplify black voices in identifying ways of supporting and empowering disabled black people.

Hamlet

SOUL



Five

How the research was conducted

Joint endeavour: In line with *The Diverse Creative CIC's* commitment to working in partnership, the research was delivered using a bespoke methodology which was developed collaboratively. *The Diverse Creative CIC* was keen to assemble an appropriately qualified and experienced black team to deliver the work. The research was devised and led by *The Diverse Creative CIC* and overseen by its founder and Director, Remi Ray. *The Diverse Creative CIC* appointed Tumi Sotire as the lead researcher and *Armstrong Cameron LLP* as report writers and to provide coaching and ad hoc support as appropriate.

Tumi Sotire is known on Twitter and Instagram as *The Black Dyspraxic* and combines his online persona with his roles as a Research Assistant at Newcastle University and as a neurodiversity advocate. His research interests are the economic consequences of health disparities. In respect of this piece of work, Tumi's primary responsibilities were: collation of a literature review; co-design (with *Armstrong Cameron*) of a semi structured interview template; alongside Remi Ray and the wider *Diverse Creative CIC* team, recruitment of interviewees; conducting all interviews.

Armstrong Cameron is a partnership between Derrick Armstrong and Dawn Cameron. We have a particular interest in working on projects which focus on socially engaged practice, issues of equality and social justice. When we carry out research projects, consultations and evaluations we work to find out what works, for whom, how and why.

To do this, we place emphasis on listening to the stories people tell about the projects they're involved with; those stories can come from participants, project deliverers, funders, commissioners and communities of interest.

Developing and finessing: Over the course of the research period, regular meetings took place between the collaborators, supporting a process of listening and critical reflection.

We talked as a group about how best to conduct the research, though – as experts in the field – the final decisions about appropriate methodology rested with *The Diverse Creative CIC*. In the course of our background reading, we became aware that *Black Thrive* (the research funder and itself a Black-led organisation) had itself recently commissioned a comprehensive literature review which sought to uncover the specific issues faced by disabled black people and worked to ensure that the research added value to what had already taken place rather than duplicating it.

In early conversations about methods, it was felt that it might be useful to conduct a survey of black disabled people living and/or working in Lambeth but in conversation with *Black Thrive* it emerged that a similar survey had recently been conducted. What was missing, however, were the individual voices of disabled black people in the borough. The focus therefore turned to collecting rich, qualitative data drawn from semi structured interviews with black disabled people.

Given the resource and effort inevitably involved in recruiting interviewees and the time required to write up key themes emerging from interviews, this would result in a much tighter focus and in fewer voices being included in the final report. However, it was felt that this was a price worth paying since the approach exemplified the ethics and values which underpin *The Diverse Creative CIC*, namely giving primacy to the voices of black disabled people and empowering them to articulate their own experiences and propose their own solutions.

Though the bulk of the research would be given over to individual interviews, it was felt that there remained a need for a literature review which would contextualise the issues and themes harvested from interviews and would function as a resource for groups and individuals wishing to progress further work.

In the event... A key advantage of taking a collaborative approach to the research was that it allowed time for critical reflection throughout the process. This proved to be invaluable when it became apparent that people attracted to participating in the research were drawn almost exclusively from the black neurodivergent community (as opposed to the wider black disabled community).

most people think,
great, god will come from the skies,
take away everything
and make everybody feel high,
but if you know what life is worth,
you will look for yours on earth,
and now you see the light,
you stand up for your rights jah!

High
Stream
Road



Over the course of the research period, 11 individuals were interviewed who identified as disabled and as black and met the criterion which required that interviewees lived and/or worked in Lambeth. All of the interviewees described themselves as being neurodivergent. Within this broad category, all had received a diagnosis of dyslexia and/or dyspraxia and/or had a diagnosis of AD(H)D. Since *The Diverse Creative CIC*'s purpose is to build confidence amongst black neurodivergent people and to support and empower them to achieve their career goals, it was perhaps predictable that the majority of people interested in contributing their experiences would themselves be neurodivergent.

The decision was therefore made to narrow the focus of this report to concentrate on blackness, neurodivergence and experiences of employment. In this respect, the research reflects much more closely the interests and focus of *The Diverse Creative CIC* as an activist organisation working for and with neurodivergent black people. In order to extend the impact of the research, it was felt that the research might also serve as a test bed for the collaborative methodology, testing its efficacy for possible future research scrutinising the ways in which 'race' might impact on experiences of other types of disability.

The table summarises key characteristics of the interviewees included in the research:

Gender	Neurodivergency	Graduate?	Employment Sector
F	Dyslexia	Y	Public sector (Care Coordinator)
F	AD(H)D with traits of both Dyslexia and Dyspraxia	Y	Private sector / student
F	Specific Learning Difference (SpLD) Dyslexia, Dyspraxia	Y	Civil Service
F	Dyslexia, Dyspraxia with traits of both Autism and ADHD	N	Private sector
M	AD(H)D	Y	Private sector
F	Dyslexia	Y	CIC / public sector
F	Dyslexia	N	Public sector
F	Dyslexia	Y	Youth work / Legal
F	Dyslexia, Dyspraxia	Y	Public sector
F	Dyslexia	Y	Youth & Community / Education
M	Dyslexia, Dyspraxia	Y	Home Office

Who were the interviewees? The remainder of this report focuses on the lived employment experiences of the eleven interviewees. Of these, nine were women and two men. All lived and/or worked in Lambeth. Interviews were conducted in line with confidentiality and privacy protocols which were mailed to interviewees in advance of their interviews.

To aid interviewees' ability to contribute as well as possible, questions were shared in advance and were screen-shared during the interviews.

Interviewees were recruited to take part through social media, personal connections and professional networks. This was a time-consuming but necessary process. Most interviews took place in late 2021 and early 2022 before and during the onset of the Omicron variant. Amongst the general population, there was a generalised ennui with Zoom-enabled communications but at the same time, many people were reluctant to meet in person. All of this added to the labour of recruiting interviewees.

All interviews took place via Zoom and lasted anywhere between 15 and 60 minutes, the mean being in the region of 30 minutes. The interviewees were semi-structured and were designed around a set of key enquiries supplemented, where necessary, with prompts.



Six Executive summary

Effectiveness of the methodology: This research was very much a joint endeavour. Led by *The Diverse Creative CIC* with the support of Tumi Sotire as lead researcher, Armstrong Cameron's roles were primarily to offer ad hoc support, to provide ongoing coaching support to the lead researcher and to write the final research report.

This was a methodology which felt new to everyone involved but which built on the strengths of each collaborator. It required significant communication throughout the research period and there was an ongoing necessity to ensure that we were all clear about where our individual roles began and ended.

It is our view that – with some tweaks (which are discussed in this report's final section, *What did we learn?*) – this is a collaborative methodology which could be adopted more widely by small black-led organisations.

Conditions represented: as discussed in Background and Context (above), the original focus of this research was on black disabled people. This was later narrowed to black people's experience of neurodivergence. In the event, the focus narrowed even further.

Everyone who was interviewed had been diagnosed with dyslexia, dyspraxia and/or AD(H)D. Nobody reported having a diagnosis of autism or of any of the other conditions which fall within the umbrella term of neurodivergence. Readers should therefore be wary of universalising this cohort's experiences as being typical of all those with diagnoses of neurodivergence.

Characteristics of interviewees: All but two of the interviewees were graduates. This is a significantly higher proportion than in the population as a whole though the proportion of the UK population attaining undergraduate degrees has increased rapidly over time from 24% in 2002 to 42% in July-September 2017.

Some interviewees had attained post graduate degrees and all were in employment and/or studying. All began working as teenagers whilst at school and had continued to work throughout their undergraduate studies.

At the time of being interviewed, all were in what could broadly be termed professional roles, ranging from a senior manager in the civil service to a workplace assessor to someone who combined an employed role with freelance consultancy. Clearly, their experiences will differ significantly from the experiences of individuals who are neurodivergent and who are not graduates and/or are not in work. Comparing and contrasting the experiences of those two groups may be an area for future research.

Late diagnosis: Most of the individuals interviewed in the course of this research received a diagnosis for dyslexia, dyspraxia and/or ADHD in adulthood. This despite the fact that it is possible to conduct assessments around the ages of 4-7. It seems clear, listening to the interviews carried out, that many of the people spoken to in the course of the research were aware that their cognitive function differed from others' but for some an actual diagnosis came as a surprise.

It was beyond the scope of this exercise to determine why individuals' diagnoses had occurred relatively late and this is perhaps something that future research may wish to examine.

Impacts of blackness in the workplace: without exception, every interviewee discussed ways in which they had felt discriminated against or had observed unequal treatment in the workplace on the basis of ethnicity. Such incidents ranged from what appeared to be blatant discrimination to more subtle actions (or inactions) which excluded or isolated black workers or prevented them from progressing. Many spoke about job segregation and internal organisational hierarchies which see black and brown workers disappear or become rare at the most senior levels within an organisation. A frequent refrain throughout the interviews and across all occupational sectors was along the lines of, *We're over represented at entry level and disappear at the higher grades.*

Impacts of disability in the workplace: The prevalence of late diagnosis perhaps helps to explain why, for most interviewees, disability was felt to have had less of an impact on their experiences in the workplace than had blackness. That said, many expressed frustration at the speed with which requests for occupational health assessments or for reasonable adjustments had been responded to. One person told us that delays in making adjustments meant that within a few months she found herself trailing behind her non-disabled peers who had begun work at the same time as her.

How do blackness and neurodivergence intersect in the workplace?

The term, intersectionality, was coined over 30 years ago. Summarising what it means today, she says,

It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.

For the purposes of this research, we were curious to find out how blackness and neurodivergence intersect. In the event, it felt as if the relative impacts of each varied over time and according to context. In addition, some of the female interviewees discussed the ways in which gender had impacted on their experiences. Others discussed impacts of social class.

Support, grace and honesty: Many of the individuals interviewed were very familiar with the various assistive technologies available to meet their needs. They spoke at length about the relative merits of *Grammarly*, *Dragon* and a host of other software solutions. Others had been prescribed medication which had been helpful whilst others had invented their own hacks for managing in the workplace.

The adjustment that was mentioned as being most helpful and transformational, however, was increased understanding, accommodation, care and patience. One person described this as *support, grace and honesty.*

Severn Employment experience

Driven: A unifying characteristic amongst interviewees was a strong work ethic. Without exception, interviewees were in employment and had all worked in one way or another – paid and unpaid – since they were teenagers. They tended to apply a broad interpretation to their definitions of work and employment. One interviewee – a woman – said that her perception of what work meant originated with the understanding that there were chores in the house that needed to be done and that some of those chores were assigned to her. Others babysat or volunteered. One mentioned that her mother had worked in childcare and had volunteered for a charity supporting disabled children – because her mother volunteered, she ended up volunteering. For everyone interviewed, it felt clear that not working was not an option.

A means to an end: All but two of the interviewees were graduates, some (a minority) completing their academic studies as mature students. Whatever age they were when they entered higher education and regardless of whether their studies were part time or full time, all combined university with paid employment. All had experience of retail and many of hospitality, either prior to studying or whilst at university. For most, it felt that these were jobs that they did to get by, though some worked in retail for several years.

For some, these early experiences of employment were positive, for others, less so. One interviewee (a man who worked in retail prior to going to university) talked about the cliquy nature of his workplace. The only black member of staff, he felt excluded from social and semi-social events and interactions. He noted also that the more popular shifts were routinely assigned to favoured colleagues who were white. When he returned to the store to seek part time work during his studies, he – in common with other Asian and black applicants – was told that vacancies only existed in the warehouse rather than on the shop floor.

A later part time role whilst at university felt quite different. Working for a national restaurant chain, he noted that most staff were from mainland Europe and further afield. He found the atmosphere at that workplace much more collegiate and friendly. These part-time roles, however, were a means to an end. When he completed his undergraduate studies, he gained employment at a multinational investment bank where he has remained for the past four years.

Saying yes to everything: One interviewee – a young woman – spent a period of her childhood in Jamaica, returning to the UK when she was 16 or 17 and determined to ensure that she *said yes to everything* to ensure that she would acquire the grades, skills and experiences to enable her to go to university. As a consequence, between the ages of 16 and 21, she developed a portfolio career making a name for herself as a freelance writer and speaker, making media appearances and offering consultation and facilitation services.

In the final year of her undergraduate studies, she worked as a women's support worker for a charity in Brixton and since then has commenced part time study for a Master's degree in International Relations. When interviewed for this research she had just begun an internship which focuses on social media and communications.

A little bit here and a little bit there: Most interviewees described varied employment experiences since graduating. Exceptions included one person who had worked for the Home Office since 2005, another who had worked for an investment bank since graduating four years ago and another who had worked in various roles in education for the past 30 years.

The majority, though, have nimbly managed their careers, moving from one sector to another or across different roles within one sector. Work in the public, charity and not for profit sectors was mentioned most frequently including the NHS, higher education, youth and community work, local authorities, the Cabinet Office, the Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care.

Amongst the minority whose work was not exclusively in the public sector, three (all women) combined employed roles in the charity or not for profit sectors with individual freelance practice and/or social entrepreneurialism. One explained the advantages of combining the two ways of working,

I definitely like the structure [of being] employed by someone because it helps me to navigate my day. But I do prefer the freedom of working for myself. I've been able to take on projects and have maybe a richer sense of the business...I definitely see the benefits of both.

A further interviewee was training to be a solicitor, specialising in asset finance.

Things seem to have changed now: One interviewee – a woman who is a psychology graduate – recounted a story of a stop/start career which will be familiar to many women who become parents.

On completing her studies with a degree in psychology, she began her career working with people with learning disabilities and then worked in a hostel for young people. Once she had her daughter, it became clear that the shifts were incompatible with her parenting responsibilities. Like many women, she had to balance fulfilling employment with being a good parent to her daughter.

Working for a time in youth work, she asked if she could reduce her hours to better accommodate her parenting responsibilities. At that point, she says, her employer's attitude changed. Her request was refused,

That made me think, 'OK, things seem to have changed now that I have a baby', and I think that had an impact on my confidence.

She's currently working as an office administrator, a role she enjoys and which she feels is helping her regain her skills and confidence working in an office environment.

Being black in the workplace

A key aim of this research was to examine the extent to which 'race' and disability might work together or separately to determine individuals' experience of employment. Kimberle Crenshaw describes this interplay of various forms of inequality as intersectionality,

It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.

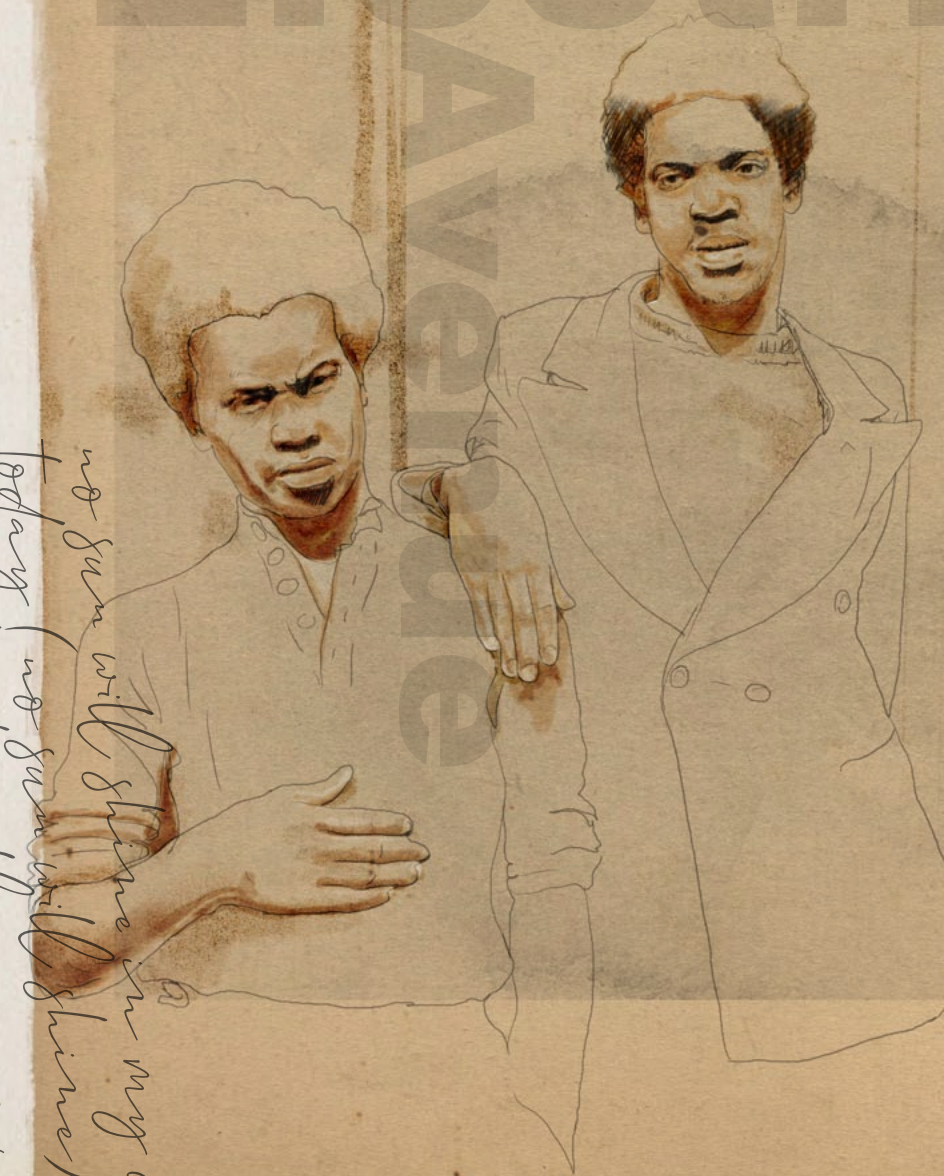
Interviewees were asked first whether they felt that being black had had any impact on their experiences in the workplace. Overwhelmingly, interviewees reported feeling that they had been treated unfavourably on the basis of their 'race' or of observing unfair treatment of other black and minority ethnic staff. This was the case across sectors and regardless of seniority.

All the black squares: Just over half of those interviewed said that finding work was not necessarily problematic. One person stated that having a British sounding name probably helped to mask her ethnicity at application stage. She might have a point. In 2009, then Work and Pensions Secretary, Yvette Cooper, tasked her officials with submitting applications for over 1000 jobs, typically submitting two or three very similar CVs per vacancy, one using a typically English sounding name and the remainder 'ethnic minority sounding' names. It was found that CVs submitted by applicants with English-sounding names were far more likely to be called for interview.

Amongst those interviewed for this piece of research, where issues arose, they tended to be in the workplace and particularly at the point at which they sought to progress.

In that respect, interviewees' experience of the workplace reflects the limited data available regarding the ethnicity pay gap in the UK. Though a 2016 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission showed that black graduates in Britain were paid an average of 23.1% less than similarly qualified white workers and that African, Caribbean and black people are underrepresented in senior roles, the absence of mandatory ethnicity pay gap data makes it difficult to plot whether the situation has improved or worsened since the report was published. By contrast, since 2017 employers with a head count of in excess of 250 have been required to comply with regular gender pay gap reporting.

no sun will shine in my day
 today (no sun will shine)
 the high yellow moon won't
 come out to play (that high
 yellow moon won't come
 out to play) i said
 (darkness) darkness (has com
 and covered my light)
 has covered



Research carried out by The Guardian and Operation Black Vote in 2017 confirms earlier data. According to this research, only 3.5% of people at the top of the UK's 1000+ leading organisations are people of colour. Being female further reduces the chances of attaining the most senior positions with less than a quarter of black and minority ethnic positions of power occupied by women.

Amongst a number of those interviewed by The *Homecoming Project*, the experience of being black in the workplace has been marked by an inability to progress. Looking back at her experiences in the various places she has worked, one interviewee said,

I feel like I'm often overlooked for certain positions. I think being black and being a woman has had an impact on my working career.

Another highly qualified interviewee compared her experiences to those of her peers,

I finished University with a Master's Degree in Human Resources and my desire was to work as an HR business partner or working a senior role in HR, but the only opportunities I got were to work as a recruitment assistant or recruitment coordinator. And if I would compare myself to my peers that are not Black, they were progressing quicker than I would. If you look at my experience, I have so many places where I've worked. I've moved places and obviously I was looking for opportunities and I was looking for growth. So, it's not been easy to even progress within the same organisation.

Some interviewees talked about the emotional labour expended on trying to maintain a sense of peace and equilibrium in an environment in which they are not necessarily valued for their talents and experience. Listening to the interviews, a sense of having to hold it down, of keeping a lid on frustration was tangible. One interviewee vividly described the effort entailed in trying to sustain a positive sense of self,

Being black in the workplace is quite a tiring experience at times. Even with all the black squares and BLM statements that have come out, not much has actually changed in my opinion...I think I have to constantly try not to internalise or allow people's behaviour or comments or lack of support, lack of interest, lack of anything, impact me and internalise it to such a degree that I no longer want to work here or I no longer want to do this role. I still have to focus on doing the best I can in my respective job.

When issues of 'race' and racism are acknowledged in the workplace, it can be in a clumsy and awkward manner. One interviewee recounted conversations that colleagues had initiated following the resurgence of interest in Black Lives Matter,

People invite you for coffee and they just start talking about diversity and being black but [they're] not the diversity lead for number one, so this is not a relevant conversation. Number two [they're] not black. And number three, would they have been having this conversation if I wasn't black? ...If they had met someone who was new and was white, would they be sharing with them all of their diversity tropes and stories when you want to be talking about other things? So why have you decided to go at diversity with me?

Voice: For one interviewee, finding and using her voice has been a long-term project. Negative messages she received about her abilities at school had stayed with her and she'd worked hard to build her confidence and self-esteem,

I've had to really learn to find my voice and I think the reason why I haven't had my voice is because I've had an education system that told me I wasn't good enough. And [so] there was a lot of work around confidence and self-esteem. And then, I never saw positive role models – nobody who looked like me and I think that does make a difference. I didn't feel like I could aspire to something because the hierarchy is male directors, possibly the female leadership in terms of management, middle management, and then the workers who are doing the front facing jobs look like me.

Another interviewee – himself a senior manager – spoke about ways in which colleagues can inadvertently exclude black and other minority ethnic staff. He mentioned a daily team meeting that takes place,

In this meeting, you'll tend to find there's me as a black guy and there's two Asian guys and you'll tend to find that we are probably the quietest people on that call every single day...Our colleagues that we work with are not necessarily racist – they're not racist at all – but there is a hidden sort of barrier somehow. If they're telling a joke, we may not get it because we don't have the same mindsets. I think that almost marginalises people and unfortunately, we work with the subconscious so they automatically think that maybe we're not interested because we're maybe not as vocal. I think that has an impact in terms of feeling included – and as human beings we want to be included.

Exclusion is not always quite so subtle or inadvertent. Another person spoke about a couple of incidents which occurred when she had been engaged by an organisation to support its leaders' diversity management skills,

And one particular leader said to me when we were doing a creative task, 'You don't need to paint your hand black because you are black already'. And it wasn't just like a one-off because the same day he said something like, 'Oh, look, I'm eating chocolate. It's just like you.'

On the outside looking in: One interviewee successfully competed for a role with an international investment bank. His experiences with the first team he was assigned to were poor. Most of his colleagues were older than him and he wondered at first whether that might explain their dismissive attitude towards him – their failure to communicate with him and involve him. He wasn't someone who had previously struggled to get on with people. When he first started the job, he looked around and noticed that there was no one that looked like him in a more senior role. That applied not just in the UK but in the US as well. It felt surprising. His attitude, though, was to take it on the chin and go with the flow.

It didn't get better. He felt ostracised and excluded.

I think I was becoming depressed at work. I didn't really realise until it was getting bad. I was so upset waking up every day. I was anxious about going to work.

Finally, he spoke to his father about how difficult he was finding things and he encouraged him to request a move to another team. His request was granted and everything improved. Suddenly, he said, he realised that work was not the problem. The problem was the culture of the team he had originally been placed with.

Being disabled in the workplace

Sourcing reliable, quantitative data about disability in the workplace can be challenging, not least because (in common with ethnicity) there is no requirement that employers produce data regarding the disability pay gap. This difficulty is exacerbated in respect of data specifically focusing on neurodivergence. Though interesting research exists in respect of employment and autism in particular, this does not appear to be the case for the conditions which are the focus of The Homecoming Project – namely dyslexia, ADHD and dyspraxia. This despite the fact that dyslexia – which affects an estimated 10% of the population – is the disability most likely to be encountered in the workplace.

That said, activist-led approaches and campaigns have helped to elevate the issues and spearhead important work around dispelling myths, supporting individuals and encouraging employers to better support neurodivergent individuals in the workplace.

Looking at the very broad category of disability as a whole, there are a few things that we know about how disabled people experience the workplace in the UK:

- Between 2013 and 2019, the disability employment gap narrowed. However, the gap remains significant with 53.2% of disabled people being in employment compared to 81.8% of non-disabled people.
- Working disabled men are more likely than non-disabled men to be self-employed (20.6% and 17.5% respectively).
- Disabled people are more likely to work part time than are non-disabled people (34.1% and 23.1% respectively).
- The disability employment gap widens as workers age. This coincides with a larger proportion of the population being disabled in the 50-64 age range.
- Disabled people are less likely to work in higher managerial positions than their non-disabled peers (25.7% and 32.3% respectively).
- Turning to the disability pay gap, *Personnel Today* reported at the end of 2021 that based on the limited data available and in the absence of mandated reporting, though the pay gap between disabled and non-disabled workers had narrowed, it remained significant. The median hourly pay for a disabled person is £11.55 (dropping to £11.10 for disabled women) compared to £13.45 for non-disabled workers.

Neurodiversity can be understood as a social justice movement which seeks to ‘deproblematise’ conditions affecting cognitive function which have previously been conceptualised as problems rather than as differences.

The ways in which human beings understand the world and process information differ from person to person; the word *neurodiversity* encompasses that understanding. About one in seven of the population learn and process information in ways which can be described as neurodivergent. The term encompasses a range of conditions including:

ADHD: affecting around 4% of the population, ADHD can cause issues with impulse control, attention, and concentration.

Autism: affecting 1-2% of the population, autism affects the way someone perceives the world. People with autism can find social interaction and change difficult and uncomfortable.

Dyslexia: a condition that gives someone language processing difficulties that cause issues with reading, writing, and spelling.

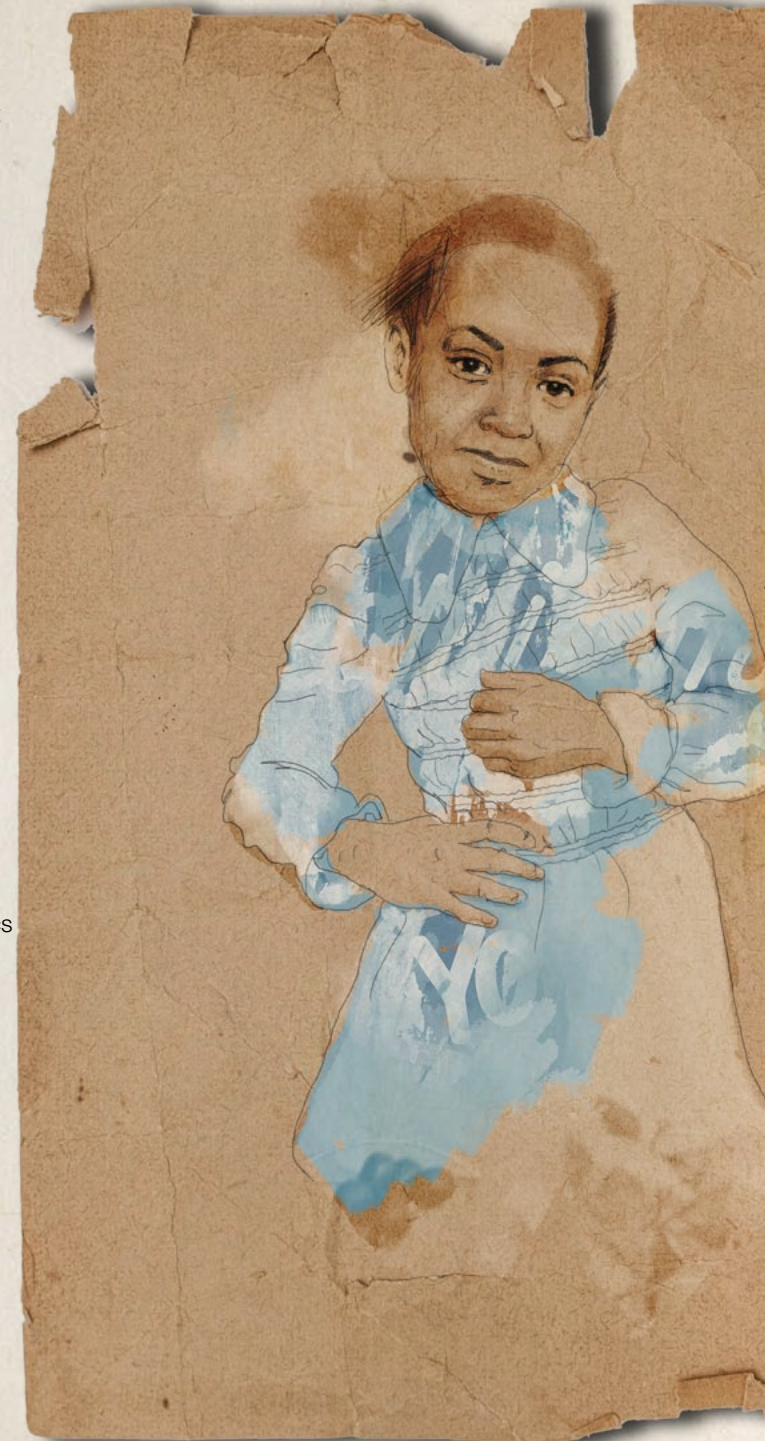
Dyspraxia: affecting around 5% of the population, dyspraxia affects physical coordination. People may seem clumsy, disorganised, and have trouble with structure.

Dyscalculia: a specific learning disorder with impairments in learning basic arithmetic facts, processing numbers and performing accurate and fluent calculations.

Dysgraphia: a specific learning disability that affects written expression. Dysgraphia can appear as difficulties with spelling, poor handwriting, and trouble putting thoughts on paper.

Tourette Syndrome: a neurological condition where there are tics they can't control - sounds and movements.

Ethnicity, culture and neurodiversity: Of course, numbers and data are not the only ways of understanding the ways in which ethnicity, culture and neurodivergence might intersect. In an interesting article for the Open University, Mel Green (Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Learning, Open University) explores whether a person's ethnicity, along with perspectives of cultures, might affect the identification of neurodivergence.



The concepts of neurodiversity and neurodivergence were coined by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, in the late 1990s and are closely aligned with the social model of disability which is based on an understanding that society disables people and that therefore it is society's duty to ensure that disabled people are able to fully function in a world which has been built without them in mind. Whilst the social model of disability has gained increased currency, it is not universally accepted.

Green points out that in some parts of the world, neurodiversity as a concept is not readily understood and defined. In some parts of the world, for example, neurodivergent conditions are regarded as mental health disorders. By way of example, Green refers to Oman where one in 1000 people are diagnosed as autistic compared to one in 90 in the UK. It seems unlikely that British people are uniquely predisposed to autism, so what can explain these differences?

One way of beginning to understand how cultural norms might affect diagnoses is to look at where diagnostic tools came from. The diagnostic tools that have been developed have been informed by cultural norms where, for example, the ability to engage socially may be valued over self-containment or introversion. Might this begin to explain the diagnostic differential?

Looking at how diagnosis plays out in the UK, Green points out that south Asian pupils are half as likely to be diagnosed as autistic as white British pupils. By contrast, black Caribbean and mixed white/black Caribbean pupils are twice as likely to be diagnosed with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs as their white peers (ADHD falls into the category of SEMH). What meanings can we ascribe to these differences? What roles – if any – might teachers' expectations play? Do diagnostic tools measure divergence from 'typical' white British characteristics? Or all of the above? Or none of the above?

Late diagnosis: Turning to the lived experiences of individuals interviewed for this research, we were struck by the number of people interviewed who had been diagnosed with dyslexia, dyspraxia and/or ADHD later in life. None of the individuals interviewed stated that they had been diagnosed pre-GCSE and many had been diagnosed whilst undertaking undergraduate or post graduate study. There may be any number of reasons for this, and certainly some of The Homecoming Project interviewees discussed the fact that they were prepared to work incredibly hard in order to achieve

the academic results that they expected for themselves. It feels likely that this strong determination to succeed may have masked the challenges they encountered. The following comment is typical amongst those whose diagnosis occurred in adulthood,

I got a good set of grades, but I had to work ridiculously hard. I know everyone has to work hard but it used to be such a struggle and I'd really beat myself up over it. And particularly because I had friends who just didn't have to work as hard.

There are other implications of a late diagnosis. For this interviewee, it meant that despite being offered support she was unable to articulate what might be helpful,

I actually discovered it when I was doing my Master's so I didn't have a lifetime to know the adjustments that I need. I had to discover the adjustments I needed and I was unaware of my rights. I was unaware of what can be given to me when they're supposed to give it to me and how they can give it to me.

She went on to point out that employers may themselves be inexperienced. Whilst they may know that they have to make reasonable adjustments, they may be unclear about what they might constitute and how support might be sourced. Like her, they might lack the language to articulate what is needed and the consequence of that can be that the adjustments are not in place and the whole experience ends up being unsatisfactory for everyone involved.

Another interviewee described how it feels to have an aspect of herself named that she hadn't previously known existed,

I didn't find out that I was dyslexic until the final year of university. At that point, what are we going to do? I'd finished all of my academics at this point...I don't really know what my dyslexia looks like or how it pans out. I'm still trying to figure things out.



One interviewee who had received a diagnosis as an undergraduate, was unclear about how the support she had received at university would translate to the working environment,

It can be difficult when you're now in the working world and you're trying to work out okay, so what does dyslexia look like on a day to day outside of academics? When you're not reading or submit an assignment?

One interviewee told us that his diagnosis of ADHD had initially come as something of a surprise; like many of those we interviewed he had high expectations of himself and had created ways of accommodating what he had assumed was his sometimes disorganised way of working. In that respect, his diagnosis came as something of a relief,

Before I had my diagnosis, I just thought that I was a bit all over the place. I do think having some diagnosis definitely explains things. I was the kind of person that would make a list of things at the start of the day, just because work is so high intensity... Sometimes I would struggle to actually focus and keep up the energy from the start of the day. Towards the afternoon my brain would kind of just turn off and I'd lack any energy or dopamine or whatever, to get myself going through stuff. So I'd have to push myself and get through but there were days where I found it hard. I think since having a diagnosis and medication, now I definitely think I'm more able to work in a way that I feel better reflects my ability

Pressure to perform: Many of the individuals spoken to in the course of The Homecoming Project research discussed the combined impacts of the pressure they put on themselves to perform and the pressures imposed by employers. One person told us that the conventional application process inhibited her ability to compete on a level playing field. **When you apply for a position**, she said, **They're judging you by your weakest skill, which is reading and writing.** She felt that those initial application processes work in favour of people who are neurotypical and that they disadvantage those who are neurodivergent.

Once in work, however, there can be new battles. This felt particularly the case amongst the cohort interviewed for The Homecoming Project, many of whom were very driven to achieve but whose progress was impeded by inadequate support and/or a reluctance to ask for support when there was no guarantee that it would be forthcoming. This may in part be exacerbated by late diagnosis. Many of the interviewees reported having developed strategies to mask their difficulties. One evoked the image of an iceberg, most of which is concealed beneath the surface. Another, who had been undiagnosed for most of her working life told us,

I spent the majority of my working life struggling and working extra hard. Doing things three or four times or staying over at work. Staying at work later because it took me longer to figure something out because obviously, at that time, I didn't know that I had a learning disability.

There is a price to pay, of course, for having to spend longer than others on tasks. This, combined with the need to ask for support, can contribute to a sense of othering in the workplace, You spend much longer going over things than others, which means you're constantly behind with your work. And, you know, over the last ten years, much has changed because technology has improved but most of the jobs that I've ever had my emails have to be checked by friends or friends have to check over coursework and things that I was doing. My whole entire life. So, I've always felt a bit like people consider me as a favour – that I always need something from them...They don't need that additional support with anything. So, I always feel like I'm starting from the back.

Intersectionality: Many of the people we spoke to told us that it was difficult to define where the impacts of blackness stopped and the impacts of disability began in the workplace. For many, they would interchange or layer depending on the particular situation individuals found themselves in.

One interviewee summarised the ways in which the symptoms of her neurodivergence can manifest themselves in the workplace. Sometimes, for example, her words may be slurred or she can feel unable to clearly express herself. On the other hand, she also brings her blackness to work and has been accused of arrogance in her interactions with colleagues. She has no way of knowing for certain whether at any one time it's her blackness or her neurodivergence (or something else entirely) that determines the way in which she is received at work. What she does know, however, is that it is important to preserve her sense of self.

They are also part of the way the disability and my blackness shows up too...I definitely feel there's been times where I haven't felt safe in spaces, to speak my truth and tell people about ways to improve certain things or give them feedback because of the way that they've perceived me...And that's obviously impacted my self-esteem and I always have to kind of remember who I am so that I don't take the identity that other people have made for me.

A number of the women we spoke to discussed the intersection of blackness, disability and gender. One talked about the ways in which power and leadership were manifested in the local authority that she works for. White men were overrepresented at director level; white women became visible in positions of power at senior leadership level; and black people – men and women – remained underrepresented at both director and senior leadership level. What that means, of course, is that the people she approaches for support are very unlikely to look like her in regard to ethnicity or experience of disability,

But then you've got to fight to get the support or make them know what is required. And it can be so exhausting, because the infrastructure is not there within the organisation to be able to make someone feel like they belong. So, it's like you're basically on your own. And then when I told my manager about access, support, she didn't know about Access to Work. She didn't know anything.

Sometimes it's difficult to disentangle the ways in which the various characteristics which constitute an individual's lived experience interact to explain treatment in the workplace,

I've seen lots of opportunities where all the leaders are white and all of the workers generally are diverse or middle management's white and then you've got the staff who are black. So, I have had the intersectionality of being a woman, being black, and having a learning difference or dyslexia. They've all possibly held me back at different points in my career.

There is a cost associated with holding it down. For many of The Homecoming Project interviewees, the experience of disclosing a learning difference then seeking support had been stressful. Some felt uncertain about how a request for reasonable adjustments would be received. Others spoke about impacts on their sense of wellbeing and safety.

I wasn't around anyone who ever had disclosed. I didn't know anyone who had come from where I came from in terms of my social economical background that was successful who had a disability or a difference. So, I didn't really see any representation that allowed me to know it was safe, and that you could still progress even if you had a something different about you.

Assessing the relative impacts of disability and blackness on workplace experiences

As we have seen, it is not straightforward to neatly separate the impacts of blackness and disability on individuals' experience of employment and progression. Listening to interviewees' experiences it felt clear that impacts can differ depending on circumstances; getting a job may be relatively straightforward but progression may be impeded on the basis of either ethnicity or disability or possibly both. Being a parent or being a woman or being working class can also be factors in determining work experiences. Pressures and prejudices may be multi-faceted and may depend on context.

Ten of The Homecoming Project interviewees expressed their opinions on the relative impacts of blackness and disability. Of these, six felt that their blackness had been more impactful; two felt that on balance disability had more of an impact (though both of these felt that disability intersected with blackness at crucial moments to explain their experiences) and two felt that both disability and ethnicity had equal impacts on their experiences in the workplace.

An invisible disability: Amongst those who felt that their ethnicity had had a greater impact in the workplace, all stated that employers' first impressions are likely to be informed by visible difference and by the meaning they assign to that difference. One person – a senior manager in the public sector – told us that with the right support, people with dyslexia can progress within the organisation. However, based on his recent experience of presenting to 40 senior leaders, he noted that not one of them was black. This contrasts significantly with administration grades where, in his experience, black workers are significantly overrepresented.

Another interviewee pointed out that she has known and experienced being black for much longer than she has known that she is dyslexic. For her, the impacts of a disability can vary hugely depending on its visibility and its effects on an individual's ability to complete day to day tasks.

And so, I think to some degree and in some cases, it will be one's disability which supersedes the race and in other cases or for the vast majority of people it may be their race that supersedes that disability.

She goes on to say that, in her experience, there can be an empathy differential in the ways that black people are treated in the workplace compared to white people. Some people, she says, **are afforded the space to break down at work and cry and have a meltdown and some people are not.**

One interview succinctly described the relative importance of ethnicity and disability in determining her workplace experiences,

People see my blackness before they see my disability. So, it's my blackness first...I mean, they're looking at my CV, they can see my surname, they probably can look me up online. So, it's my blackness before my disability because my disability is a hidden one.

Code switching: As we have seen, many of the people interviewed for The Homecoming Project spoke about feeling the imperative to work much harder than their peers to achieve equivalent results. The notion of having to work twice as hard is a common trope in black families and communities. One of the interviewees spoke at some length about the effects of this internalised pressure.

She told us that though the necessity to work hard was drummed into her as a child, it took a little while for her to understand **why** it was necessary. In time it became clear that this was a strategy to overcome barriers erected by racism; a way of ensuring that employers had fewer excuses to overlook talented black job candidates. The problem with this as a strategy, according to this interviewee, is that it can inadvertently dampen ambition,

Sometimes you don't go for certain jobs because you think as a black person, 'Maybe I can't do this' or because you've gotten that played in your house, sometimes subconsciously about what you can achieve.

She also observed that no matter how hard she worked, there were sometimes informal processes at play which determined recruitment and selection decisions. She gave the example of an organisational culture where some of the key hiring decisions would be made in a pub after work. As someone for whom going to the pub was not part of her culture, she knew that she was excluded from a space where important decisions were made.

Bringing gender and social class into the mix can, in one interviewee's experience, further complicate progression for black workers. Indicators of social class such as the school that they attended or where they were brought up can leave people feeling marginalised and excluded,

I can be excluded at different parts of my journey within the workplace. It's true, but I've been able to... decode or go into different roles. You can be different people. So just to me, you can play different roles. Not that you're not authentically being you but you have to adapt to your environment.

*and matter...
but if you know what life is worth,
you will look for yours on earth,
and now you see the light,
you stand up for your rights. jahn!*

Seeking and receiving support: Some interviewees spoke about the importance of the informal support which black workers and other workers of colour provide to each other. Two interviewees spoke at length about the unseen emotional labour which is expended by black workers on supporting other black workers in the workplace. Interviewees were struck by the similarity and predictability of the problems that black workers and other people of colour faced as a group. Under those circumstances, forming alliances with other workers of colour provides a means of both seeking and receiving support.

As a person of colour, I think I formed really strong relationships with people of colour at work very, very easily because most of us have the same issues to raise or experiences or microaggressions that we heard. So, the more I made friends with black people, the more I realised other people experienced the same issue, I think what a lot of us would come together when we could, encourage each other and speak about things as black people.

One interviewee discussed the hidden costs which black workers bear in supporting their colleagues,

No one can put a cost to people from black and Asian minorities who have supported their staff, their colleagues, do extra hours, stay late, when somebody is feeling that they've been bullied or feeling that something's not right at all. There's a cultural misunderstanding.

Amongst The Homecoming Project interviewees, two spoke about seeking support in respect of their neurodivergence. One – a woman – mentioned having become involved with *ADHD Babes*, an online community for black women and non-binary people with a diagnosis of ADHD. Another spoke about the ways in which the impacts of her disability and poor treatment by an employer following the birth of her daughter had affected her confidence had combined to make her feel unconfident about re-entering the workforce. Seeking support, she approached *Exceptional Individuals*,

*I think having a disability impacted my work when I wanted to go and get the next job. So when I had my daughter, I felt like my confidence had gone. My ICT skills are not updated. And I just didn't think I was ready to go for a job. I didn't think I'd get it and I just thought my disability [and] my anxiety [will] get me at the interview. I just started having these negative thoughts. Like 'Oh, they're gonna know that I have dyslexia, dyspraxia and all these things' came to mind. And I decided to go in and join an agency again called *Exceptional Individuals* who work with people with learning disabilities. They helped me with my IBM competencies... and gave me some interview prep. And luckily, it got me a job.*



Support in the workplace

We wanted to learn what, if any, support black neurodivergent people have accessed in the workplace and how useful they have found it. Government funded support to disabled workers and job seekers is primarily provided through two funded programmes of support as follows:

Access to Work: Access to Work is a government-run discretionary grant scheme designed to support disabled people to take up or remain in work. To be eligible for support, individuals must meet the definition of disability as set out in the 2010 Equality Act:

a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [your] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

Access to Work is not means-tested, does not have to be paid back and can be used to pay for a range of support. Dyslexia support, for example, might include assistive technology equipment and training and coping strategies training. Support can also be sought for issues arising from a diagnosis of dyspraxia and ADHD. Successful applications for support in respect of ADHD have included ADHD Coaching, noise cancelling headphones and significant workplace support with aspects of a job role.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP): PIP was introduced by the government in 2013 as part of an overall welfare benefits review, one of whose aims was to reduce the caseload of disability benefit claimants by about 20%.

PIP was heralded by government as *a more sustainable benefit [to] make sure support continues to reach those who face the greatest challenges to taking part in everyday life*. It aimed to meet the additional costs associated with disabilities and long-term health conditions. It is non-means tested and can be applied for by people aged over 16 and under 65 who are in or out of work.

Decisions about individuals' eligibility for PIP and the level at which it is awarded is contracted out to private providers whose function is to assess the extent to which an individual can complete activities reliably, in a timely fashion, repeatedly and safely with the use of aids or adaptations or support from another individual.

Unsurprisingly, the terms 'reliably', 'timely', 'repeatedly' and 'safely' have specific meanings which can be open to interpretation.

Some neurodivergent adults may be eligible for PIP payments. According to the Department for Work and Pensions' own statistics, there are a total of 37,784 PIP claimants with AD(H)D listed as their main disabling condition. By comparison there are 127,399 awards for Autistic spectrum Disorders and 7968 for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. The average success rate for all assessed PIP claims is 53%; for ADD/ADHD this dips a little to 49%.

In addition to the above support programmes, employers (along with schools, local authorities and other service providers) are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make **reasonable adjustments** in order to enable disabled people to have equal access to goods, products and services. This duty lies with the employer or service provider and disabled people should never be expected to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments might include changing the way in which a particular activity is done. For example, ensuring that job application information is available in a range of formats. They may also include physical adjustments to premises or the availability of specialist aids or services such as providing ramps, accessible toilets, BSL interpretation or captioning.

The 'reasonableness' of an adjustment is dependent on factors such as the extent to which the adjustment would overcome the disadvantage an individual or other disabled people experience; the size of the organisations and the money and resources available.

What until the basic human rights
Are equally guaranteed to all
Without regard to race
Dis a war
That until that day
The dream of lasting peace
World citizenship
Rule of international morality
Will remain in but a fleeting
illusion to be pursued
But never attained
Now everywhere is war - war

How well have employers accommodated individuals' neurodivergence?

On the whole, interviewees seemed fairly knowledgeable about the support to which they are entitled in the workplace. Most also mentioned the availability of Access to Work. The extent to which support had been effective varied, however.

Disclosure: Despite diagnosis coming late for many of the interviewees, most felt able to disclose in the workplace. However, there can be a difference between requesting an adjustment and having that adjustment made. One person mentioned that she could be offered a job in January and find herself waiting four months for adjustments to be made. This, together with the bureaucracy associated with occupational health assessments and having adjustments approved, had put her at a disadvantage with other new starters,

Some other people started at the same time as me, but they're two times ahead of me just because they didn't need the adjustments. But for me, it's almost like you're getting punished, to have a disability, because you have so many approvals. And you question why you have to go through so many approvals to get the adjustments that you need. And then, despite having a previous occupational health assessment, you still need to do a new one.

The requirement on the disabled person to wait – sometimes for several months – for adjustments to be made or for assistive technology etc. to be acquired – can have serious impacts on individuals' ability to perform at optimum level. This can be particularly disadvantageous where employers have performance appraisal systems which kick in within a few months of appointment.

One person spoke about their experiences of occupational health assessments and their concern that they had sometimes felt somewhat generic. This person wondered whether having specialist dyslexia assessors – perhaps assessors who were themselves dyslexic – might help,

Assessors just have a generic knowledge of your profile. In an ideal world, it would be great if they came to me and said, 'OK, we've got a dyslexic assessor that will actually know what you're going through... the last time I had access to services I had to really explain what dyslexia and dyspraxia is, and he got it to a degree, but nothing beats it when especially I've got someone else who's dyslexic and dyspraxic just gets it and I think it would be so good if you almost had a match across all disabilities.

Hacks: Many of the people interviewed had been able to access assistive technologies and other support which made their working lives more straightforward. However, amongst the most effective 'adjustments' had been self-initiated hacks which individuals had devised for themselves. Here's a couple of example examples:

I have to have certain strategies and techniques. So in order to make sure I stay on track, I will have a calendar and I'll make sure I put in it what I'm meant to be doing in the morning and what I'm meant to be doing in the afternoon. I have to do that because if I don't I could go off track.

Working from home has been good for me... I can start working at seven if I want to focus. If I get a little bit tired at ten, I can take a break and have lunch or breakfast or whatever.

Time and space: Interviewees spoke about the importance of recognising one's own strengths. One person, for example, felt that strategic thinking was one of her particular strengths. The problem was, however, that pressures in the workplace and the necessity to shift quickly from one project to another almost without taking a breath, meant that she had little time to deploy her strengths,

I am somebody who needs time to digest the information because one of my strengths is strategy, but I need the room to be able to do it and I can't operate with a lot of confusion. And in terms of my current employment, they operate in a lot of confusion and it puts the team under additional pressure but for somebody with additional needs it puts them under immense pressure. So, I think space to be able to digest and then implement, but there's no space in between projects. ...and then there isn't much learning. So, when you deliver something, there's no space to then go back through the learnings and the debriefs and stuff like that – it's straight into something else.

As pressure to deliver quickly and efficiently increases across organisations in all sectors, there is less and less time to reflect, to debrief and to share learning with colleagues. Factoring in time and space could be of immense benefit to all staff and could, arguably, lead to better project delivery, better outcomes and a more fulfilling work environment for all staff.

Support, honesty and grace: By far the comments made most frequently about support in the workplace concerned understanding, compassion and accommodation of difference. These are human qualities and cannot be replicated with assistive technologies, aids or adaptations.

One interviewee said that it's a matter of having employers listen carefully and respond appropriately to the needs that disabled people express,

I can't tell you how many times I've said 'Please do not tell me something verbally; it needs to be written because I need to print it out. And I need to read it in order to digest, Don't bombard me with ideas.' And it just doesn't seem to stick; leadership doesn't seem to reinforce it. And so you're constantly having to navigate around people just not having the consideration that you have additional needs.

Another put it simply,

I think for me, it's just about support: support, honesty, and grace. I think if my workplace created a safe space to fail and to also ask questions I could improve my ability dramatically to do my work, right. I don't necessarily have that.

Thirteen

What did we learn and where do we take that learning?

What did we learn about intersectionality?

A key aim of this work was to interrogate how blackness intersects with disability to help determine individuals' experiences in the workplace.

As we have seen, the focus of the research narrowed over time and resources were targeted at learning about the experiences of black neurodivergent individuals living and/or working in Lambeth. What we learned was that the impacts of 'race' and neurodivergence combined and intersected in sometimes surprising ways according to context. We learned also that gender and social class can often be in the mix. Interestingly, though, only women spoke about impacts of gender.

On the basis of the interviews conducted for this research, it feels as if racism, ableism and sexism are shape shifters whose impacts manifest differently at different points in people's careers. For one woman, for example, being a woman became problematic at the point at which she had a child. Others noted that job segregation became most apparent at senior levels in organisations; black people (and, to an extent, women) gradually become invisible at the most senior levels.

Interviewees tended to talk at most length about the impacts of racial stereotyping and discrimination. Many pointed out that theirs are invisible disabilities and that employers are more likely to respond to what they can immediately discern about an individual. This is not to say that our interviewees did not encounter problems in accessing the support they needed to carry out their roles; for some, gaining access to assistive technologies, coaching and other support was an uphill struggle.

Where do we take learning about intersectionality?

The research was primarily focused on carrying out semi-structured interviews with a self-selecting group of people who met the research criteria. Individual interviews gave people the time and space to articulate their own experiences and to make sense of them in ways which were meaningful to them.

In developing the semi-structured interview template, we were keen to ensure that we did not inadvertently ask leading questions or bring our own preconceptions to the conversations. This helped to ensure that interviewees were able to identify for themselves where, how and when 'race', neurodivergence (and, for some, gender and social class) intersected in the workplace.

In planning future research, it will be important to ensure that it proceeds in a spirit of curiosity untainted by assumptions about how intersectionality might manifest itself.

What did we learn about this as a model for black-led research projects?

As discussed earlier (Section 3: How the research was conducted), this research was conducted in a spirit of collaboration and joint endeavour. The work was conceived by *The Diverse Creative* – a black-led CIC whose role is to support, campaign and advise on issues of neurodivergence, wider disability issues and employment. The research was itself funded by a black-led organisation – *Black Thrive Lambeth* – which was established in 2016 to address the inequalities that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of black people in Lambeth. Its role is to work collaboratively across sectors to reduce inequalities which lead to poorer socio economic outcomes for the borough's black residents.

Having attained funding for the research and the wider Homecoming Project to go ahead, *The Diverse Creative CIC* went on to assemble a research team comprising Tumi Sotire as lead researcher and ourselves – Armstrong Cameron LLP – to offer ad hoc support, individual coaching and to write the research report.

The approach was not without its challenges. It required of all the collaborators a commitment to ongoing, respectful communication; a shared understanding of the value that each partner brought to the project; and a preparedness to candidly and respectfully confront issues as they arose rather than waiting for them to become problematic. Underpinned by these principles, we believe that the collaboration as a whole was greater than the sum of its parts.



Where do we take learning about the research model?

A recent report by social justice organisation Ten Years' Time, found that despite black, Asian other minority ethnic groups making up around 14% of the UK population, independent funders still fail to give a fair share of grants to these groups.

Further, up to 87% of micro and small voluntary sector organisations led by black and other minority people were found not to have enough sufficient funds to last more than three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and were also the least likely group to receive financial support.

Given these dispiriting truths, if a vibrant, responsive black third sector is to be sustained, it will be more important than ever to find ways of working together to that end. Black organisations are typically small, with limited capacity and frequently rely on hand-to-mouth funding models. It is our view that collaboration across black organisations is an important strategy in building capacity, enabling small organisations to bid for larger, more ambitious projects by drawing on the strengths and expertise of a range of collaborators. In addition, a model such as that adopted by this research project builds and encourages experiential learning. Certainly, each partner in this research project reported that they had learned a great deal from being involved. That learning can then be taken back into individual organisations, building their capacity and resilience.

What did we learn about the potential for future research?

As we have seen, the scope of the research narrowed over time. On reflection, all partners feel that this became a strength of the approach since it amplified the voices of individuals with lived experience of neurodivergence. Our commitment to developing enquiries and methods iteratively also enabled us to consider the model's replicability for other research examining issues of 'race', employment and disability.

We all emerged from this exercise feeling that there remains much work to be done to unpick the ways in which 'race' and disability impact on individuals' experiences in the workplace. We also felt that the approach designed for this research project has significant strengths which can be replicated or adapted for future work.

Where do we take learning about the potential for future research?

As discussed in previous sections of this report, the (self-selecting) participants in this research were characterised by:

- Being in employment
- Living with a diagnosis of dyslexia, dyspraxia and/or AD(H)D
- Working – broadly speaking – in professional roles
- Being graduates (with two exceptions)
- Receiving a late diagnosis of dyslexia, dyspraxia and/or AD(H)D

Whilst it is the view of all collaborating partners that the methodology proved effective in interrogating the lived experiences of some neurodivergent individuals, it is felt that the methodology could have wider application. *The Diverse Creative CIC* might wish – possibly in partnership with other black-led disability organisations – to consider applying the research methodology to examine the employment experiences of other groups and individuals. For example,

- Those with other diagnoses of neurodivergence (for example, autism)
- People who are not in employment
- People with sensory or physical impairments

What did we learn about coaching as a technique to add value to the research process?

The research took place during a period where England was still affected by Covid 19 restrictions. This meant that all communications took place over Zoom or telephone. We were keen to develop ways of sustaining contact and support throughout the research period and to this end, individual coaching was provided by accredited coach, Derrick Armstrong (of Armstrong Cameron LLP) to Tumi Sotire, the lead researcher. Using a humanistic, client-centred approach, confidential coaching sessions provided a dedicated space where the lead researcher was able to work through issues relating to the project, identifying his own solutions. This approach is designed to build capacity and resilience, enabling the coachee to apply latent skills and build resolve.

Both coach and coachee found coaching to be a valuable addition to the research methodology, since it ensured that there were pre scheduled moments throughout the research period that were dedicated entirely to critical reflection, problem solving and future planning.

Where do we take learning about coaching?

Coaching was a highly valued element of the research methodology and partners feel that it could have wider application in research of this type, particularly where researchers are working independently and may have limited support structures around them. It provides a pressure valve and a space for reflection and action-planning.

What did we learn about neurodivergence in the workplace?

The original aims of the research were to:

- Illuminate the lived employment experiences of black disabled people;
- Uncover the ways in which disability intersects with issues of 'race' to explain individuals' experiences of employment and progression in the workplace;
- Amplify black voices in identifying ways of supporting and empowering disabled black people.

In the event, and for reasons discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report, the focus of the research narrowed so that attention was shifted to the lived experiences of black people in the workplace who had a diagnosis or diagnoses relating to neurodivergence.

The research took place at a time when Covid 19 restrictions were very much in place. This meant that recruitment of interviewees had to be carried out remotely using social media and existing professional and personal networks. Interviewees were self-selecting and the necessity to carry out interviews using Zoom restricted the interviewee pool to people with reliable access to broadband.

Taking into account all of the above, to what extent is it possible to say that the research achieved its original aims? In the view of the collaborating partners the research achieved its aims but with some important caveats:

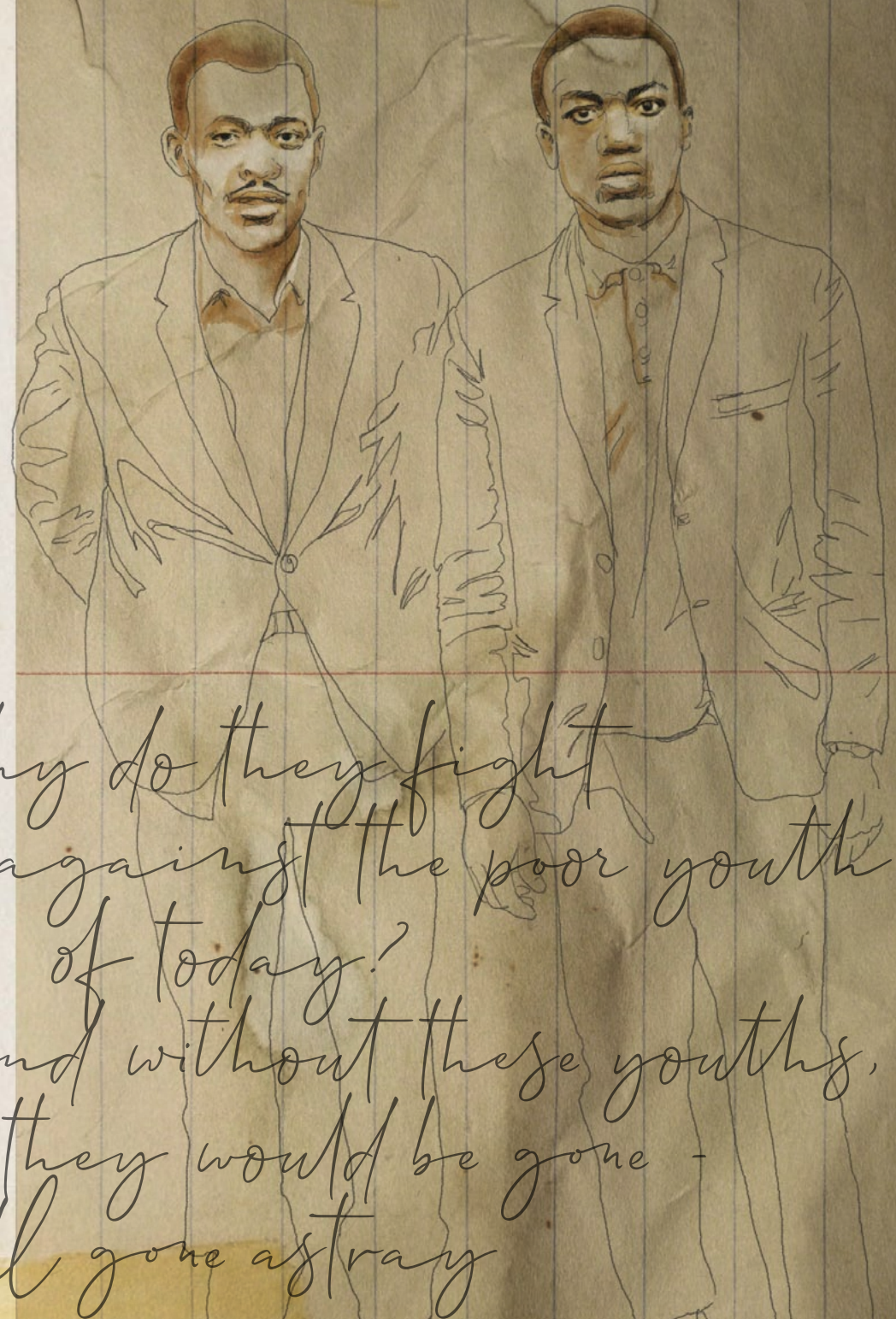
- Though the voices of black disabled people were placed front and centre in the work, the number of voices heard was limited. That said, the use of semi-structured interviews added depth and texture which would possibly have been absent had the original idea of circulating a survey been pursued.
- Interviewees did not reflect the diversity of the black disabled community or of the black neurodivergent community. All had received a diagnosis of AD(H)D, dyslexia and/or dyspraxia. However, the clear focus on those particular conditions provides a deep dive into the experiences of a section of the black neurodivergent community.

Where do we take learning about neurodivergence in the workplace?

The research has provided an opportunity for black people living with dyslexia, AD(H)D and/or dyspraxia to articulate how they experience the workplace. We would like to see that opportunity afforded to other black neurodivergent people and to the wider black disabled community.

For this to happen, it will be important to:

- Build the capacity of the black-led disability movement, encouraging sharing and peer learning.
- Consider the ways in which diverse partners can come together in a spirit of joint endeavour to carry out further research. Collaborators for this piece of research comprised a black-led campaigning and advocacy group, an academic researcher and a black-led evaluation consultancy.
- Consider building into research budgets an allowance for individual coaching.
- Ensure that all research processes are informed by a deep commitment to accessibility and inclusion. This may, for example, involve making efforts to ensure that the ability to participate as an interview is not impeded by an individual's inability to access reliable broadband.
- Ensure that sufficient staff and time resource is devoted to recruitment of interviewees. It was notable that interviewees who participated in this research were all in work, had (in the main) attained undergraduate degrees and worked in professional roles. Attracting a broader and more diverse interviewee cohort may take additional time.



why do they fight
against the poor youth
of today?
and without these youths,
they would be gone -
all gone astray

The Diverse Creative comprises:

Remi Ray

Neurodivergent High-Performance Coach,
One of the Top 50 most influential
neurodivergent women in the UK, 2019,
award-winning entrepreneur with over 12 years
of experience, Creative Business strategist
and Programme Curator.

Tumi Sotire

The Black Dyspraxic, health economist,
award-winning dyspraxic advocate, featured
in Forbes, advisory board member of Centre
for Neurodiversity at Work, Neurodiversity
in Business Co-production Board Member,
Neurodiversity speaker.

Marcia Brissett-Bailey

Top 50 Influential Neurodivergent Women 2022
Narrative changer! Forbes feature! Author!
Nominated for the Stereotype Buster at the
2021/22 Neurodiversity Awards! Co-founder
BDA Cultural Perspective Committee! WFDA
trustee! Advisory Board Member of Centre
for Neurodiversity at Work | Neurodiversity in
Business Co-production Board Member.

Ruth-Ellen Danquah

Neurodiversity Chief Innovation Officer. ADHD
author. Intersectional Neurodiversity Speaker.
DEI Consultant

Lorna Cadogan

The Diverse Creatives Programmes
Coordinator, Unique Dyslexic Creative,
Qualified Project Manager, Community
Manager and Chair of a TRA.

Homecoming Project; Literature Review

What are the experiences of Black Disabled people in the workplace who are either employed or unemployed and living in Lambeth?

Tumi Sotire

The Diverse Creative CIC

**the
Diverse**
creative



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Abstract

This literature review aims to provide a snapshot of the literature relevant to the employment experiences of black disabled people in Lambeth.

Chapter 1 provides a background to contextualise this review alongside information about The Diverse Creative CIC as an organisation and ends by setting out the three main aims of the review.

Chapter 2 describes several models and types of disability, exploring potential reasons for the negative experiences people with disabilities may encounter in the workplace. People who are disabled are significantly less likely to be unemployed compared to people who do not have a disability, and consequently they are more likely to hold lower socioeconomic status. Potential solutions to improve the experience of people with disabilities are explored towards the end of this chapter, as we mention stakeholders who are working to achieve these solutions.

Chapter 3 provides key definitions of ethnicity. The ethnicity employment literature shows that Black people are less likely to be employed compared to their white counterparts, and Black people are also less likely to progress up the career ladder. These reasons explain why the ethnicity pay gap exists. Strategies to improve the experiences of Disabled people at work are described. Organisations that are implementing these strategies are also discussed.

Chapter 4 explores intersectionality, and the scarcity of literature on Black Disabled people in the workplace in the UK. The experiences of Black Disabled people in the workplace are described in detail. The challenges of Black Disabled people in the workplace are compounded by both their ethnicity and disability in the workplace. Stakeholders that who either support people who have a disability or support black people need to do more to support people who live within this intersectionality. Experiences of Black Disabled individuals are discussed.

Chapter 5 looks at Lambeth demographic data, organisations that could potentially be of most benefit to Black Disabled people in Lambeth. Recommendations for local stakeholders are provided to improve the experiences of Black Disabled people in the workplace.

Chapter 6 comprises concluding remarks on the review.

...of people (think, great god will come from the skies, take away everything and make everybody feel high. but if you know what life is worth, you will look for yours on earth. and now you see the light, you stand up for your rights. jah!

Chapter 1 Introduction

Diversity and inclusion are trending topics of recent times. Popular culture is increasingly affirming that human beings are unique, and we all deserve to be valued, accepted and celebrated irrespective of our differences. The focus of this literature review and research plan is to examine the experiences of Black and Disabled individuals at work, who are either currently employed or unemployed and living in Lambeth.

There is evidence that Black individuals face barriers to progression and wellbeing in the workplace. The past few years have made it clear that we live in a country with structural barriers against the progression of Black people; from the UK's reaction to George Floyd's death to the need for forcible removal of monuments representing Black oppression, Black people live within a vivid reality of racism. We have witnessed this play out in print and social media with the treatment of Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka, Jaden Sancho and Raheem Sterling following England's loss at the UEFA Euro 2020 final. The media outrage that surrounded the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's relocation to the US is another example of how issues of racism are permeating the media landscape more than ever before. In spite of this, the current government issued a report in 2021, dismissing the reality of structural racism and further exacerbating the frustrations of Black people living with racism in the UK.

Disabilities also create barriers, and these vary between individuals. Those who are disabled in the UK also experience discrimination in a nation where there is a lack of awareness of adjustment to – and support in – living the lives they are able to live. Advocacy charities and other stakeholders are doing all they can to fight for equality in opportunities and better treatment for disabled people to reflect that of their non-disabled counterparts. However, there is still a long way to go in the fight for awareness and change.

Companies are beginning to realize that it is to their advantage to cultivate a diverse workforce. McKinsey has demonstrated that the more diverse a company is, the more likely it is to outperform its competitors; thus, there is a business case for diversity ⁽¹⁾. Having a diverse and inclusive workforce means that companies are more likely to have a comprehensive demographic representation and greater impact, because their products and services cater to their target populations more accurately. Teams are more likely to generate a wide variety of ideas that could create more income. Companies become more socially accepted, and people are more likely to demand their services, primarily because of the culture that such institutions create and endorse. It's a win for everyone. Employees are demanding greater effort from the government to this end, as well as from their employers.

Creating sustainable solutions to dismantle barriers in the diversity and inclusion space for an entire population becomes exponentially more difficult if we choose to overlook the critical fact that intersectionality exists. It is for this reason that our study focuses on the intersection of ethnicity and disability.

The Homecoming Project is a powerful example of a sustainable solution to the issues faced by this demographic group. The Homecoming Project was delivered by The Diverse Creative CIC and was completed in June 2022. The Diverse Creative CIC is a disability support hub whose mission is to eliminate the stigma that people with disabilities encounter ⁽²⁾. This is achieved by raising awareness within the community, creating workshops that benefit the lives of disabled individuals and disseminating empowering messaging. This organisation was founded by Remi Ray, a neurodivergent high performance coach with over 11 years' business experience, having been diagnosed with Dyslexia at 19 years old.

The Diverse Creative CIC focuses on the following main areas:

- Screening services for those who have ADHD and Dyslexia
- Conducting official Dyslexia Assessment
- Providing a consultation service for organisations
- Providing one-to-one support for individuals
- Providing coaching packages for individuals and organisations
- Conducting workshops for the local community
- Providing business programmes for disabled entrepreneurs
- Providing Personal Finance programmes for individuals
- Providing Employment support for individuals
- Providing Student empowerment support and guidance

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2 Thediversecreative.org. [cited 30 January 2022]. Available from: <https://www.thediversecreative.org/>

The Homecoming Project aimed to develop and deliver specialised support to Black Disabled people either working or living in the Lambeth area, empowering them to access and succeed in employment. The project was delivered by Black professionals with decades of experience in this field. This programme was funded by Lambeth-based organisation, Black Thrive.

The components of the programme were as follows:

- access to a bespoke training programme with individual coaching
- psychometric testing and dyslexia screening
- post-programme support
- access to resources tools and masterclasses
- access to qualitative data focusing on disabled employees

As part of The Homecoming Project, a report assessing the content and wider implications was recently published, comprising 11 semi-structured interviews with Black neurodivergent individuals who either live or work in the Lambeth area. The original aim of this literature review was to provide context and background to aid The Homecoming Project Report; the comprehensiveness of this literature review suggests that this piece of work will benefit the wider Black Disabled community, and their allies.

The aim of this literature review is threefold:

- 1 To contextualize the experience of those who have to earn a living being Black and Disabled**
- 2 To describe potential solutions available for Black Disabled people who work in the UK**
- 3 To describe the support available for Black Disabled people who live in Lambeth.**

So Jah seh,
 "Not one of my seeds
 Shall sit in the sidewalk.
 And beg your bread."
 (No, they can't and you
 know that they won't!)
 "And verily, verily, I'm
 saying unto thee, 'I
 will give myself and love
 I manity.'"
 'Cause puss and dog they
 get together:
 What's wrong with loving
 another?
 Puss and dog they get
 together:
 What's wrong with you
 brother?'

Chapter 2 Disability

Models of Disability

There are several ways of conceptualising and understanding disability as a human experience. The medical model of disability defines disability as a problem within a person's body that requires medical attention. This frames difference related to disability as a deficit or handicap, caused by a biological impairment ⁽¹⁾. The medical model tends to imply that there is a problem to be solved; this can create low expectations of disabled individuals, reducing their sense of self-efficacy and control over their life ⁽²⁾.

Rather than defining disability as an individual, physiological problem, the social model views disability as a social construct. The model suggests that disability arises due to various factors such as physical environments, culture, organisations, employment and other elements of society's infrastructure that do not adequately fit the individual who is said to have a disability ⁽³⁾. The social model presents disability as a vehicle that discriminates against and excludes specific individuals from full function within society. In other words, the concept of disability creates injustice in society ^(4, 5).

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) provided a different perspective of disability, the biopsychosocial model of disability ⁽⁶⁾. This model can be viewed as a hybrid between both the social and medical models of disability. The biopsychosocial perspective is achieved by the following:

- Differentiating between impairments of body function and structure
- Distinguishing between activity and capacity limitations
- Differentiating between participation restrictions

Thus, a disability only exists when the nature and extent of impairment causes difficulties in certain scenarios, where there are specific tasks and demands on a person's capacity. In other words, the biopsychosocial model defines an individual's disability based on context, rather than biology ^(1, 7).

The biopsychosocial model has been criticized, as it has been suggested that the model emphasizes ableism, discrimination and prejudice against people who live with a disability, due to the use of the word 'impairment'. On the other hand, others have concerns that the social model overlooks the concept of impairment of biological or psychological structure or function.

The Human Rights Model of disability has also emerged over the last few years ⁽⁸⁾. This model prioritizes the individual's inherent dignity above the person's medical characteristics, only focusing on the latter when necessary. All decisions affecting the individual in question are made with the person as the focal point. This model places the 'problem' away from the person and back onto society ⁽⁹⁾.

Medical Model of Disability	biopsychosocial model of disability	Human Rights Model of disability	Social model of disability Model of Disability
Disability is determined by biology, causing an individual to deficient or handicapped in function or structure.	Disability is defined largely by scenario and context, not by biology.	Human dignity is paramount to the individual. The problem is not the individual, it is society	Disability is a social construct. Society, education, employment etc. have been designed in a way that does not align with my needs, and that needs to change.

Figure 1: Four different models of disability

There is no right or wrong model, and it is possible to subscribe to a combination of models in order to understand the picture of a person with disability in their environment. The decision of which model is the best is subject to the context of discussion and is contested within academic literature and online. Some regard the medical model as the root of ableism ⁽⁹⁾. Each model is purely a theoretical framework but can set a foundation for how disability is viewed in society.

How is disability defined in the UK?

Disability is legally defined in the Equality Act 2010, which was created as the culmination of 116 preceding pieces of legislation in the UK. The purpose of the Equality Act was to provide a legal framework that was fully inclusive, protecting the rights of all individuals equally and ensuring that everyone had to access the same opportunities, irrespective of who they were or where they were from. This legal document provided the UK with an anti-discrimination law that protected the rights of all citizens ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Nine recent pieces of Legislation were merged for the 2010 Act:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- the Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Disability was defined in this way in the Act:

"The Act defines a disabled person as a person with a disability. A person has a disability, according to the Act, if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (S6(1))".⁽¹⁰⁾

The following factors must be considered to determine whether an individual is disabled:

- A person must have a physical or mental impairment
- The adverse effects must be substantial
- Substantial adverse effects must affect everyday life and have must have long-term effects ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Diversity within Disability

The disabled community is a diverse group, and disabled individuals perceive their disabilities in unique ways. How individuals experience ableism also varies with the nature of their disability. Andrew Pulrang described how various disabilities could be classified ⁽¹¹⁾, broadly breaking them down into four categories:

1 Types of disability can be grouped into:

- Mobility Disability
- Manual Dexterity and other physical disabilities
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Learning disabilities or mental/cognitive problems such as acquired brain injury
- Neurodivergence such as autism, dyslexia and ADHD
- Mental health conditions
- Communication difficulty
- Severe disfigurement
- People with a long-term health condition or illness such as cancer, fibromyalgia, ME, diabetes or HIV
- Learning differences

2 Personal Histories:

Not every disabled individual is born with a disability. For example, an individual who becomes disabled due to a car crash resulting in a spinal cord injury will have a completely different experience to someone born with cystic fibrosis.

3 Intersectionality:

Intersectionality will be covered in more detail later on in this review; in short, people have overlapping social identities due to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and social status. These different social identities will directly impact society's barriers to individuals, such as stigma and discrimination.

4 Disability model of preference:

The disability model an individual is more likely to subscribe to will significantly impact how one perceives disability.

Because the Disabled community is not homogenous, solutions cannot be one-size-fits-all. Every Disabled person's experience is unique to them. Solutions and reasonable adjustments for one disabled person may not be effective for another. For example, ramps and lifts in an office will not support an autistic individual who can walk without difficulty. The diversity of disability increases the complexity of providing adequate support for all disabled individuals at work.

Disability and Employment

Employment can be described as a critical aspect of disadvantage for disabled people of working age ⁽¹²⁾. According to the Family Resource Survey in 2019-2020, 14.1 million people in the UK have a disability; 8% of children are disabled, 19% of people who are of working age are disabled and 46% of disabled people are age-eligible to collect a pension ⁽¹³⁾. Approximately 4.4 million disabled people are in paid work. People with a disability are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Between July and September 2019 in Britain, 53% of disabled people were in paid employment compared with 81% of non-disabled people ⁽¹⁵⁾. After a year of having a disability, the probability of being employed reduces by 11% ⁽¹⁶⁾. This decrease in the employment rate could be due to prejudice, amongst other factors. At least 1 in 3 people still believe that disabled people are less productive than non-disabled people ⁽¹⁷⁾. There is an employment gap of 38.5% in London, which means that 370,000 disabled Londoners are out of work ⁽¹⁸⁾. This figure has remained at over 30% since it was first observed in 2009 ⁽¹⁹⁾.

In a government survey of over 14,000 disabled people, 48% of disabled people agreed or strongly agreed that their employer was flexible and made reasonable adjustments where needed; however, only 1 in 4 people agreed or strongly agreed that their promotion opportunities were the same as their non-disabled counterparts ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The Valuable 500 and Tortoise Media looked at FTSE 100 companies and found that no company had an executive or senior manager who had disclosed a disability. This finding could be due to a lack of disclosure of disabilities in the workplace for fear of negative career impact ⁽²⁰⁾.



Disability and Poverty

High unemployment is a key driver of poverty. Four million disabled people live in poverty, and approximately 50% of the UK population living in poverty are either disabled or living with a disabled person. The poverty rate is exceptionally high when an adult in the home is disabled, at approximately 33% in the family. People who receive disability benefits have a lower employment rate and are more likely to rely on benefits for their income. The value of these benefits is majorly inefficient due to a freeze of benefits ⁽²¹⁾. Disabled people are also less likely to save; they are therefore more vulnerable to financial shocks ⁽²²⁾.

Drivers for disabled people living in poverty include:

- A higher cost of living, as they often need to purchase specialist equipment and services
- Lower qualification levels - 19% of disabled adults have a university degree compared to 35% of non-disabled people
- A disability pay gap, resulting in disabled people learning significantly less than their non-disabled counterparts.

The Costs of Disability

- Scope released a Disability Price Tag report in 2019. These were some of their findings ⁽²³⁾:
- Being disabled, on average, costs an individual an extra £583 per month
- Excluding housing, this extra cost is, on average, equivalent to half their income
- On average, £68 for a disabled person is equivalent to £100 for a disabled person

These findings led to the development of recommendations supporting a more practical government benefit system to ensure that the Department for Work and Pensions adequately supports disabled individuals and their families with Universal Credit. Scope also recommended that the Personal Independence Payment assessment process be reformed to more accurately capture the extra costs borne by disabled people ⁽²⁴⁾.

The Disability Pay Gap

According to the Office of National Statistics, the median pay for non-disabled employees was £12.11 per hour and £10.63 an hour for disabled people, thereby putting the pay gap at 12.2%. Their report revealed the disability pay gap to be wider for men compared to women. The disability pay gap was widest in London at 15.3%; managers, directors and senior officials experienced a higher rate greater gap at 13.1%, professionals at 5.4% and associate and technical professionals at 5.1%. The narrowest gap was found in elementary jobs at 1.2%. Sales and catering, leisure and other services at 1.8%, as were administrative and secretarial jobs ⁽²⁵⁾.

The impact of Covid19 on Disabled employment

In an enquiry investigating the impact COVID-19 has had on the labour market, the Department for Work and Pensions found the following: ⁽²⁶⁾

- Disabled people are more likely to work in industries affected more by the pandemic compared to non-disabled people.
- Disabled people are more likely to be facing redundancies compared to non-disabled people.
- Disabled people are overrepresented in sectors such as hospitality, catering and retail – sectors that were forced to shut down at the height of the pandemic. Academics from the Universities of York and Sheffield reported that the long-term consequence of this overrepresentation could widen the employment pay gap.
- Disability charity Leonard Cheshire conducted research that revealed 71% of disabled people were left unemployed due to the pandemic, 25% of disabled people experienced a reduction in working hours, and 25% suffered a decrease in pay.
- Disability Rights UK described the impact of COVID on jobs for disabled people as catastrophic, citing a disproportionately affected redundancy rate and a reduction in working hours.

Government-led solutions

In 2017, the UK Government set a goal to reduce the disability employment gap by 50% by 2027 ⁽²⁷⁾, with an aim of providing 1 million people with work.

Access to Work is a government-led initiative that supports people with disabilities to help them at work. Employers may pay upfront for this support, but can claim funds back from the government ⁽²⁸⁾. Employers are legally required to provide reasonable adjustments that will accommodate people with disabilities.

In July 2021, the UK Government published a national disability strategy for employment: ⁽¹⁹⁾.

- ‘Create an Access to Work Adjustments Passport. The aim of this strategy is to provide support disabled people with their transition into a career, in encouraging employers to recruit, retain and progress their disabled employees creating an inclusive workplace.
- Disability Confident: This strategy creates a Voluntary Reporting Framework and disseminating best practices to employers.
- Attempting to increase the number of employment services available.
- Improving access to advice on employment rights, introducing carer’s leave and creating a flexible working environment.
- Explore the help that disabled entrepreneurs will need to support their businesses
- Improve opportunities for disabled people in the Civil Service to ensure the support to thrive at Work and other governmental services was armed forces.
- More support for disabled people to start and stay in Work. ⁽¹⁹⁾

As the issues with employment and disability and poverty worsen, the need to educate and support Disabled people with personal finance, wealth creation and entrepreneurship becomes ever clearer.

Supporting Disabled entrepreneurs forms an exciting part of this objective. The Government will increase access to finance for Disabled entrepreneurs, increase existing business support, and assess the additional business challenges. The Government also vowed to increase engagement for Disabled individuals.

This report was only published last July, so it is difficult to project the success of these plans, but the strategies, although largely theoretical, hold promise. What Disabled people and communities need above all is action.

According to Disability Rights UK, the Government's Disability Strategy is 'disappointingly thin on immediate activities, medium-term plans and details of the longer-term investment. The Strategy has insufficient concrete measures to address the current inequalities that Disabled people experience in living standards and life chances.'⁽²⁹⁾

Another option that can benefit people with disabilities is assessing the skills gap and training Disabled individuals with specific skills for the 21st century. These jobs could include coding, digital marketing, video editing, software engineering, mechanics for electric cars, or jobs specific to providing solutions towards climate change.

Organisations that support people with disabilities at Work

National disability charities

UK Disability charities such as Disability Rights UK and Scope do a great deal to support people with disabilities in every aspect of life, including employment. Scope runs various campaigns such as Disability Benefits without the Fights, empowering disabled individuals to access adequate support from the welfare system by getting a more appropriate assessor⁽³⁰⁾.

They also publish reports to raise awareness of the impact of disability on various aspects of life for disabled people, such as Scope's Disability Price Tag report, cited widely in our research⁽²³⁾. Scope has an online community for people who would otherwise struggle to connect.

Disability Rights UK is a leading UK disability charity, running a range of awareness campaigns and providing free fact sheets on benefits, welfare reform, work and skills⁽³²⁾. Their policy priorities include:

- Ensuring benefits meet the additional cost of disability
- Influencing government to tackle inequality
- Supporting people into work
- Enabling disabled people to take up more leadership roles

Disability Rights UK and Scope, together with the University of Warwick, the Business Disability Forum Unison and other organisations, put their signatures together to produce a Disability Employment Charter in October 2021⁽³¹⁾. The Charter petitions the government to tackle employment discrimination, and go significantly further than the limited measures reported in the National Disability Strategy by doing the following:

- Improving Access to Work
- Putting time limits on making reasonable adjustments
- Strengthening the Disability Scheme
- Introducing disability acceptance at work
- Enforcing monitoring

Condition-specific organisations

Condition-specific charities are also doing fantastic work, such as the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB), which has a national helpline and provides specific advice on how employers can make companies more inclusive for blind or partially-sighted individuals in recruitment and retention contexts⁽³²⁾.

Another example is the British Dyslexia Association, which offers employer support and training on inclusivity for people with dyslexia. They lobby the Government for the interests of people with dyslexia. One of their main campaign areas is 'to enable dyslexic people to achieve their potential'⁽³³⁾.

So if a fire make it burn
(make it burn, make it
burn)

And if a blood make ya run
(make ya run, run, run),
Pasta de 'pon top (aaa-
aaah), can't you see? (doo-
doo-doo-doo)

So you can't predict the flop.
Eh-eh! (doo-doo-doo-doo)

Other organisations that Disabled people with employment

EmployAbility

Founded by the multi-award-winning Tab Ahmad, EmployAbility was the 2019 People's Choice Smart Award Winner. Ahmad received the 2020 Genius of the Year Award in recognition of her innovations supporting neurodiverse students into work. EmployAbility is a non-profit organisation that empowers talented disabled students, graduates and experienced professionals to work for the world's biggest and wealthiest companies such as Google, Amazon, JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs ⁽³⁴⁾.

Remploy

Remploy is a government-owned business running for the last 70 years to deliver employment and skill support. They work with over 2500 businesses to make the work environment more inclusive for people with disabilities. Remploy was one of 13 organisations to be first awarded the status of a Disability Confident Leader by the Department for Work and Pensions. They work with disabled employees and employers to build careers for people with disabilities. ⁽³⁶⁾

Entrepreneurship should be a viable option for disability

All-Parliamentary Party Group for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (APPGIE) was set up in July 2020, with the goal of stimulating, encouraging and nurturing inclusive entrepreneurship throughout the country. ⁽³⁷⁾

Birkbeck University hosted the Centre for Innovation Management research debates on public policy, an online event. In a recent event, various stakeholders such as academics and practitioners discussed Disabled people in self-employment. This event was introduced by Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Chairwoman of the APPGIE. The event was also chaired by Jacqueline Westley, the FRASA founder and CEO of Universal Inclusion and The Inclusive Entrepreneur Network.

A research fellow at Aston Business School Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship, Dr Eva Kasperova, explained that the motivations for disabled people in starting a business included:

- The prospect of greater autonomy and financial reward
- Greater flexibility over work tasks, hours and location
- Recognizing a gap in the market, notably for disability-related products or services
- A desire to make a difference and contribute to society
- For those who have acquired a disability later in life, as a way of coping with a significant life change and channelling feelings of frustration or hopelessness into something positive

Far from being unlikely entrepreneurs, Dr Kasperova's research shows that disabled people are more likely to launch businesses and social enterprises than non-disabled people. The desire to be self-employed or start a business could arise from barriers experienced in the workplace.

Beth Kun Holland, who is the founder of Patchwork Hub and MOKOM as well as the ambassador of the Inclusive Entrepreneurship Network, described the challenges disabled entrepreneurs face:

- 'Lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility, both physically and virtually
- Inconsistent support available across the UK
- Lack of integration of disability and entrepreneurship support
- The inaccessibility of the mainstream start-up space, which often glorifies burnout or focuses on building a business alongside 9-5 work
- Co-designing all programmes of support (mainstream or disability-specific) with people with lived experiences of disability, and recompensing disabled people for their expertise and time, as with all other professions. ⁽³⁸⁾

Working on a forklift
In the night shift;
Working on a night shift,
With the forklift,

from A.M. (Did you say that? Why did you say that?)

to P.M. (Working all night!)

Working on a night shift, yeah!

(Did you say that? Why did you say that?)

Upfull and right!

Well, if it's (all night!) - if it's (all right!)

all night (all night!) -

Warehouse (all right!),

You're empty, yeah!

Go around the corner,

Bring your goods!

Go around the other corner,

Bring your suitcases. (All night!)

By the sweat of my brow, (All right!)

Eat your bread! (All night!)

By the sweat of my brow, (All right!)

Eat your bread!

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Nine Chapter 3 Ethnicity

What is Systemic/Institutional Racism?

Systemic/Institutional racism is the outcome or consequence of society's systems being designed to align with the idea that certain ethnicities are superior to others. These systems can include criminal justice, housing, education and employment. This study also reflects on the expression of systemic/institutional racism within employment ⁽¹⁾.

The Cambridge Dictionary describes institutionalised racism as 'policies, rules, practices, etc; that are a usual part of the way an organisation works, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people, and unfair or harmful treatment of others, based on race' ⁽²⁾.

For the purposes of this study, we have defined 'Black' as having at least one parent of African or Caribbean descent. The three broad ethnicity groups included are Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Other, which includes White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, Asian and Black African, and Asian and Black Caribbean. It is important to note that not all of our review sources express a clear or explicit definition of 'Blackness' and use the term.

We attempted to avoid the term Black Asian and minority ethnic, 'BAME' is avoided, as the specific population of interest comprises Black people, and those of mixed heritage with at least one Black parent or grandparent. However, due to the nature of the evidence currently it wasn't always appropriate to avoid this term.

Racism in the UK

Over the last two years, conversations on race have become a significant theme of mainstream discussion. This is partly due to the following events:

The UK response to the death of George Floyd, and the advancement of the Black Lives Matter movement UK ⁽⁶⁾

- The toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol ⁽⁷⁾
- The disproportionate effect COVID-19 has had on ethnic minorities' health and jobs (blogs.bmj.com; committees.parliament.uk) ⁽⁸⁾
- The emigration of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to the US due to their experiences of both the media and certain members of the Royal family ⁽⁹⁾
- The racial abuse suffered by Marcus Rashford, Jaden Sancho, and Bukayo Saka and Raheem Sterling after the penalty shootout of the UEFA 2020 Euro Final ⁽¹⁰⁾

An in-depth discussion of these events is beyond the scope of this review, but the significance of their impact is further reinforced by the fact that Reni Eddo-Lodge's book, 'Why I am no longer talking to White people about Race' was a Sunday Times bestseller for five weeks last year, despite being published in 2017 ⁽¹¹⁾.

In the joint committee on Human Rights for Black People, Racism and Human Rights, the report of session 2019-21 carried out by ClearView Research (a Black-led research organisation) found that over 75% of Black people do not think their human rights are equally protected when compared with White people. The reason for this perception of unfair treatment was investigated in greater depth through interviews, and it was found that this inequality was experienced in crime, education and employment. Human rights in these contexts is defined as the "right to education", the "right to life" and the "right to a fair trial" ⁽¹²⁾.

The population of Black people in the UK

In this review we are focusing on Black people, rather than BAME and non-white people more generally. According to the 2011 Census, 4.4% of the population of England and Wales are either of Black or mixed Black heritage. A breakdown of these figures can be seen below ⁽¹³⁾. The most recent available population census data was gathered 10 years ago and may since have changed in the last decade due to birth, death and migration rates. Data for the next census was gathered in 2021.

UK Black Population in 2011

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage of UK Population
Black African	989628	1.8%
Black Caribbean	594825	1.1%
Black Other	280337	0.5%
Mixed White/Black African	341727	0.3%
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	165974	0.8%
Total	2457579	4.4%

The census shows that the majority of Black people in the UK live in London, as shown below.

Ethnicity	Percentage of UK Population
Black African	58%
Black Caribbean	57.9%
Black Other	60.7%
Mixed White/Black African	39.5%
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	28.0%

The Labour Force Survey (LFS), conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), is the largest household study in the UK. This survey provides a comprehensive picture of employment within the UK population and therefore provides official measures of employment. A majority of the sources used within this chapter analyse and report data is from the LFS ⁽¹⁴⁾.

What type of jobs do Black people do?

The table below shows data from the ONS on the types of jobs Black people held in 2018.

Type of Job	Percentage
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	5%
Professional	21%
Associate Professional and Technical	12%
Administrative and Secretarial	9%
Skilled Trades	6%
Caring Leisure and Others Service	18%
Sales and Customer Service	7%
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	7%
Elementary	18%

Systemic racism is described as 'policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organisation, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race' ⁽³⁾.

Structural racism is a similar term that is used interchangeably with those aforementioned. In the UK, this 'unfair advantage' is associated with white people, giving rise to the term 'white privilege'.

What is white privilege?

White privilege is a term that encompasses the unfair inherent social and economic advantages white people have over those of other phenotypes, based on the philosophy that white people are superior to people of colour. This idea is found throughout society, and was the philosophy that shaped how major Western systems and institutions were developed. The term was first used by the female activist and scholar, Peggy McIntosh, in 1998 ^(4, 5).

Unemployment rates for Black people compared to white people

Data mentioned below was taken from research briefing paper in The House of Commons Library, on unemployment by ethnic background.

The UK national unemployment rate was 4.5% in April-June in 2021. The unemployment rate for Black people was 10.0% in the same period whilst the unemployment rate for White people was 4.0%. In 2020, the employment rate for Black people was 9.7% compared to that of white people at 3.3%; the national employment rate was 3.8%. The unemployment rate from July 2020 to June 2021 for Black people was 3 times higher than that of White people, at 12% and 4% respectively. Black people had the highest employment rates compared with any other ethnicity – Pakistani people at 10%, Bangladeshi people at 10%, Chinese people 8% and Indian people at 10% ^(15, 16).

Unemployed	16-24 years (%)	25-49 years (%)	50+	Total (%)
White	13	3	3	4
Black	36%	9	8	12

Black people were also more likely to be unemployed than White people across all age groups.

Unemployed	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
White	4.8	3.9	4
Black	10.4	13.1	12

Black women had the highest unemployment rates compared to any other ethnicity or gender group. The unemployment rate for Black women was 13.1%, despite the unemployment rate for women overall being 4.6%. ⁽¹⁵⁾.

The literature reinforces the evidence above. Ethnic minorities are more likely to receive lower pay, have higher unemployment rates, higher under-employment rates and higher forms of economic inactivity. These differences can be thought of as an additional cost, or tax, for being an ethnic minority in the UK ⁽¹⁷⁾. Ethnic inequalities within employment have persisted for decades; for example, Li et al showed that men from more ethnic minority background were less likely to be employed compared to white men in the UK in the years 1972-2005 ^(18, 19).

Ethnic minorities are likely to have disproportionately higher levels of unemployment during economic recessions. Unemployment rates have been shown to be three to four times as high in some ethnic minorities as those for White people. The likelihood of ethnic minorities landing professional jobs is lower than for White people; ethnic minorities also tend to earn less than their white counterparts for the same jobs ⁽¹⁹⁾. The employment rate for Black people has improved over time: from 2004 to 2018, the employment rate had risen by 7% and the employment gap between White British workers and their Black counterparts had reduced from 14 points to 9 points ⁽²⁰⁾.

According to the Business in the Community (BITC) Race at Work Survey in 2018, 91% of Black Africans and 64% of Black Caribbean people have a Bachelor's, Masters or PhD qualification, compared to 52% of White people ⁽²¹⁾. In spite of this overwhelming advantage, a report published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies found that people of ethnic minorities are still less likely to be employed ⁽²²⁾.

we gonna stand up for our rights! yeah, yeah, yeah!
so now we see the light (what you gonna do-?)
yeah, yeah, yeah!

Potential reasons for the inequalities at work

Explanations for the racial inequalities in employment are multifactorial. There is evidence to suggest that part of this inequality may arise from employer bias and discrimination against ethnic minorities ⁽²³⁾.

A meta-analysis reported that the ethnic discrimination has been widespread in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) between the years 1990 and 2015, with reports of employers discriminating against potential employees due to their names, for instance ⁽²⁴⁻²⁷⁾. Another study revealed that ethnic minorities bearing relevant skillsets and competencies have to submit 50% more applications than their White counterparts to obtain an interview ⁽²⁸⁾.

While some first-generation migrants may have a poor grasp of the English Language, employment inequalities still exist for second-generation ethnic minorities, who are more fluent in English ⁽²⁹⁾. The long-established social networks of white workers and employers facilitate career progression and employment attainment; such networks are less well-developed for those of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities may have a poorer understanding of the UK's labour market, which can lead to lower employment rates ⁽³⁰⁾.

In addition to these factors, people from ethnic minorities are more likely to live in more economically deprived areas, where fewer jobs are available to them. A considerably higher number of people from ethnic minorities have lower-skilled, more unstable jobs compared to their white counterparts ⁽³¹⁾. These ethnic penalties can also be observed amongst graduates. BITC Race at Work Survey Black male graduates are four times less likely to be employed compared with White men ⁽³²⁾, and Lesser-Phillips showed that similar employment disparities even applied to graduates from Russell Group universities ⁽³³⁾.

Ethnicity pay gap

Socioeconomic class plays a role in the ethnicity pay gap. People from working class backgrounds earn 16% less than people from more privileged backgrounds, and the disparity further increases when you consider gender. Black women from working-class backgrounds earn £20,000 less than White British men from privileged backgrounds. These pay gaps are much larger in professional and business fields, such as medicine and finance ⁽³⁴⁾. Black men have a graduate pay penalty that is larger than their non-graduate counterparts – Black graduates are likely to be paid 15-19% less than White graduates, however Black non-graduates get paid 9-14% less than non-graduate White men. Women from ethnic minorities experience a smaller penalty compared to white women. This data demonstrates that although socioeconomic background is an important factor driving labour market outcomes, it cannot explain away the widely documented differences in gender- and ethnicity-based pay ⁽³⁵⁾ – across all measures, women tend to earn significantly less than men.

A report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) seemed to offer a contrasting perspective. This showed that Black Africans who were born in the UK generally get paid the same as those in their white counterparts and Black African women earn 21% more than White British men but women tend to earn significantly less than men across all genders. There was no explanation as to why this was the case within their findings, but it is of note that the majority of British-born Africans live in London and other metropolitan areas, where wages are generally higher ⁽³⁶⁾. There is evidence that African children are more likely to outperform their White counterparts at school and are also significantly more likely to go to university ⁽³⁷⁾. The study also showed that the ethnicity pay gap had decreased over time.

Determinants of the ethnicity pay gap are also likely to include occupational segregation. 41% of Black Caribbean and 47% of Black African immigrants work within the health sector, compared with only 20% of British-born White people. Ethnicity pay gaps also exist within professions. Within the NHS, the UK's largest employer, Black staff get paid 4.6% less than their White counterparts ⁽³⁸⁾. Black people and other ethnic minorities are more likely to have lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs within the NHS and are also less likely to get promoted. Another driver may be differences in proportion of part-time or full-time roles, and differences in public and private sector salaries. Older people usually get paid more than younger people, given experience and time within roles. This report showed that Black people were younger on average than White people, with the exception of Black Caribbean people ⁽³⁸⁾.

Ethnicity and the career ladder

In February 2014, the Guardian reported that there were no Black executives in any of the top three roles in Britain's 100 biggest companies. This was the first time this occurred in 6 years. The statistic is not yet set to change, as the number of people in the leadership pipeline is also decreasing from 1.4% to 0.9% ⁽³⁹⁾.

This evidence was obtained from Green Park, a recruitment and diversity consultancy ⁽⁴⁰⁾. According to the Financial Times, the founding head of the Commission for Racial Equality and Green Park's chair said, "It is time that shareholders, consumers and employees start questioning whether Black Lives Matter is just rhetoric. A lot of business leaders in the last nine months have been telling us they care. We need to stop hearing how much people care and how appalled they are... and hear a lot more at the next AGM about what they are going to do." ⁽⁴¹⁾

According to Black Voices, 31% of Black employees feel that they have been overlooked for a promotion. In a CIPD Report published in 2017, 44% of Black people and 42% of mixed race people said that their career to date has failed to meet their expectations. This is significantly more than White people, whose statistic sat at 31%.

The top three work factors that enabled BAME employees to meet or exceed their initial career expectations were the following:

- having built relationships across the organisations they worked for
- utilising opportunities to get involved in different projects to develop skills
- having effective line managers at crucial points of their career

According to this study, the top three reasons BAME employees were hindered from achieving their career progression were cited as the following:

- Talent being overlooked
- Negative office politics
- A lack of effective training

BAME employees are significantly more likely to say that their identity or background might affect their access to opportunities compared to White British employees.

Black people are significantly more likely than White British employees to desire to work with more senior colleagues from higher levels on the career ladder to help them boost their career. Both White and BAME groups have similar rates of job satisfaction. Approximately 50% of BAME employees feel they need to be careful of how much they tell their colleagues about their personal lives ⁽⁴²⁾.

Effect of COVID-19 on Black employment

Unemployment for Black young people rose to 41.6% in the last quarter of 2020 compared to 24.5% in the previous year. The unemployment rate of Black young people increased by 35% (10 points). This rate is triple the unemployment rate increase of White young people at 13% (3 points) ⁽⁴³⁾.

It has been suggested that the ONS should provide more consistent employment statistics broken down by ethnicity and age ⁽⁴⁴⁾. According to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), BAME unemployment is rising twice as fast during the pandemic. The unemployment rate for Black people overall has risen to 13.8% in this time, which is triple the rate for White people ⁽⁴⁵⁾. The average loss of income for both jobs and furlough was almost triple for the BAME population (14.2 %) compared to the white population (5.1%). The percentage of people who left employment between February and July 2020 has doubled in BAME groups compared to White people ⁽⁴⁶⁾. The resolution foundation reported similar events during the June-December period of 2020 ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Black people and Poverty

According to the ONS reports, Black people make up 15.2% of the population in the lowest 10% of deprived neighbourhoods and make up 12.4% of the most employment-deprived in the UK ⁽⁴⁸⁾. These statistics are disproportionate, as Black people only comprise approximately 4% of the UK population. These statistics show that there is a correlation between employment and poverty. The percentage of Black people living on relatively low incomes between 2017 and 2020 was 27% before housing costs, and 40% after housing costs, compared to 16% before housing costs and 19% after housing cost for White people ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

What is being done to overcome these barriers?

The solutions for addressing barriers include:

- Understanding what is happening within organisations
- Organisations becoming aware of intersectionality, and examining progression barriers through a variety of lenses
- Critically appraising organisation culture
- Actively encouraging employee voices to inform change
- Addressing unconscious biases
- Creating policies that provide practical support for race pay gap reporting
- Developing guidance for employer action
- Supporting and advocating for better quality people management practices

When tackling issues with employment, one is faced with two issues – recruitment and job retention.

For the Government:

The Government must act on the recommendations based on the McGregor-Smith review, Race in the Workplace ⁽⁵⁰⁾. The BITC race report strongly recommends that the government makes reporting on the ethnicity pay gap compulsory, the same way that companies report on gender.

Employers should do the following:

- Senior leaders should actively sponsor Black people in their workplace
- Employers must initiate race-related conversations and encourage active listening, working alongside Black employees to create actions that would improve their experiences in the workplace
- Government and employers should sponsor, support and encourage employees into participating in the Race at Work Survey
- Employers should set targets to increase the representation of Black people at senior levels within their organisations.
- Companies should demonstrate commitment to diverse supply chains and encourage their suppliers to do the same
- Employers should sign the Race at Work Charter and commit to intentionally taking action on leadership, capturing and publishing ethnicity data, zero tolerance on bullying and harassment, promoting equality and supporting the progression of ethnic minority talent in the workplace ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Future solutions of addressing racism in the workplace

Following on from the McGregor-Smith Review, the findings led Business in the Community to create the Race at Work Charter, five calls to action for organisations committed to improving equality of opportunity in the workplace. The charter includes allyship and inclusive supply chain commitments ⁽⁴²⁾.

The McGregor-Smith Review

The McGregor-Smith Review, led by Baroness McGregor-Smith CBE, highlighted issues faced by businesses in cultivating BAME talent in the workplace. This report concluded that a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion can only be taken seriously once workforce data is scrutinised and transparent. The report is a business case as well as a moral one. Diverse organisations that are intentional about attracting and developing people from the widest pool of talent consistently perform better. If BAME talent is fully utilized, the economy could receive a £24 billion injection within a year, a whopping 1.3% top-up for the nation's GDP.

How to achieve success:

1 Gather Data - Organisations must gather and monitor the data by:

- Setting the company's aspirational targets
- Publishing data to show the progress of the company
- Be intentional about encouraging employees to disclose their ethnicity

2 Take Accountability – senior executives must take accountability by:

- Ensuring executive sponsorships for key targets
- Embedding diversity as a key performance indicator
- Sharing experiences and improving opportunities, by encouraging participating reverse mentoring schemes
- Using annual reports to be transparent about how senior staff achieved success within the company in particular chairs such as CEOs and CFOs

3 Raise Awareness: all employers must raise awareness of diversity issues by:

- Ensuring unconscious bias training is undertaken by all employees
- Bespoke unconscious bias training to reflect roles – e.g. workshops for executives
- Creating and establishing inclusive professional networks
- Making space for mentoring and sponsorships

4 Examine Recruitment: HR directors must critically examine recruitment processes:

- Rejecting non-diverse shortlists
- Challenging educational selection biases
- Drafting job specifications in a more inclusive way
- Diversifying interview panels
- Creating work experience opportunities for everyone, not a select few

5 Change Processes: Responsible teams must change processes to encourage greater diversity by:

- Being transparent and fair in reward and recognition
- Improving supply chains
- Being open about career pathways

6 Government should support by making these changes:

- Legislate to make publishing data mandatory
- Create a free, online unconscious bias training resource
- Develop a guide to talking about race at work
- Work with Business in the Community and others to develop an online portal of best practice
- Seek out ways to celebrate success, such as a top 100 BAME employers list.
- Write to all institutional funds with holdings in FTSE companies and ask them for their policies on diversity and inclusion, and how they ensure that the representation of BAME individuals is considered across the employee base of the companies they invest in ^(50,51)

The McGregor-Smith review made the following recommendations:

Employers should publish aspirational targets for diversity and inclusion	Diversity should be one of a company's key performance indicators	Senior employees should be more transparent about how they achieved career success
Companies should publish available data on ethnicity	To implement reverse mentoring when senior members of executive board are mentored by people of unique backgrounds	Mentoring and sponsoring should be provided
Encourage employees to disclose data that will improve the formation of diversity data within the business	Non diverse candidate list should be rejected	Government should work on guidelines about race at work
The government should set legislates to enforce companies to publish ethnicity data	School, college and university selection bias should challenge	Government should work on an online portal to showcase best practice
The government should provide free unconscious bias resources online	Interview panels should be more diverse	A list top 100 BME employers in the UK should be created
Employers should make unconscious bias training compulsory	Transparency, fairness and recognition	Government should write diversity policies for top institutions
Senior executives should undergo unconscious bias workshops	Diversity in supply chain and diversity from every level	Government should annually review what policies are working
Executive sponsors for all diversity and inclusion issues should be provided	Transparency on career pathways and how to advance up the career ladder	

Are the solutions working?

Research has suggested that the size of ethnic penalty is dependent on the duration of unemployment, rather than the type of job a Black person applies for. This implies that policies would be more effective in reducing the magnitude of the ethnic penalty if they focus on reducing the unemployment within ethnic minority groups, rather than changing the type of roles that ethnic minorities enter ⁽³¹⁾.

Organisations that help improve the employment of Black people

The Black Young Professional network

The Black Young Professional network (BYP) is a business aimed at improving the employment outcomes of Black people across the globe. It was founded in 2016 by Kike Oniwinde, who is based in London and created the network in order to connect Black professionals and students globally, providing role models, visibility, opportunities and business support. BYP raised over a million dollars in their crowdfund in 2020, and currently support 500,000 members located across 5 continents ^(53,54).

Rare Recruitment

Rare Recruitment are leaders in placing Black people in top jobs in the UK. They work with top companies to ensure they have access to a diverse talent pool. These companies include British Petroleum, Ernst & Young and BlackRock. They describe themselves as leaders in diversity graduate recruitment. Rare launched the Race to Recruitment and Fairness Commitment, which aim to help employers create and implement practical solutions to improve the employment experiences of Black people ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

10,000 Black Interns

This programme, launched in 2020, partnered with more than 700 companies to provide 2000 paid internships to Black students and recent graduates, every year for five years. Internships are based in a wide variety of sectors including education, healthcare, media, banking and law ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

SEO London

SEO London is a registered charity aimed at providing educational training and support for young people from underrepresented backgrounds in the London area. This amazing charity provides support that covers the entire professional life cycle. They have programmes for law, consulting and investment banking, among other sectors ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

Industry-specific support

Industry-specific support is also available. For example, Melanin Medics and BME Medics, who aim to support Black people to get into and progress within the medical sector ^(57, 58). The Society of Black Lawyers and The Lawyers Network offer similar support for Black people in Law ^(59, 60).

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Chapter 4 Intersectionality: Being Black and Disabled

In the last two chapters, we explored the experiences of people who have a disability, and people who are Black in employment. This chapter explores the experiences of Black disabled individuals in the UK in the workplace. For us to truly understand the experience of Black disabled individuals, it would be beneficial to understand the concept of intersectionality.

What is intersectionality?

In America, the point at which two roads meet is known as an intersection. The verb, intersect, means to meet and cross at a point, or to share a common area and overlap ⁽¹⁾.

The term 'intersectionality' was first introduced by Kimberly Crenshaw, an African American female civil rights advocate, and scholar of critical race theory ⁽²⁾. Critical race theory is an intellectual, social and legal framework based on the premise that race is a social construct used to oppress or exploit people who are not white. ⁽³⁾

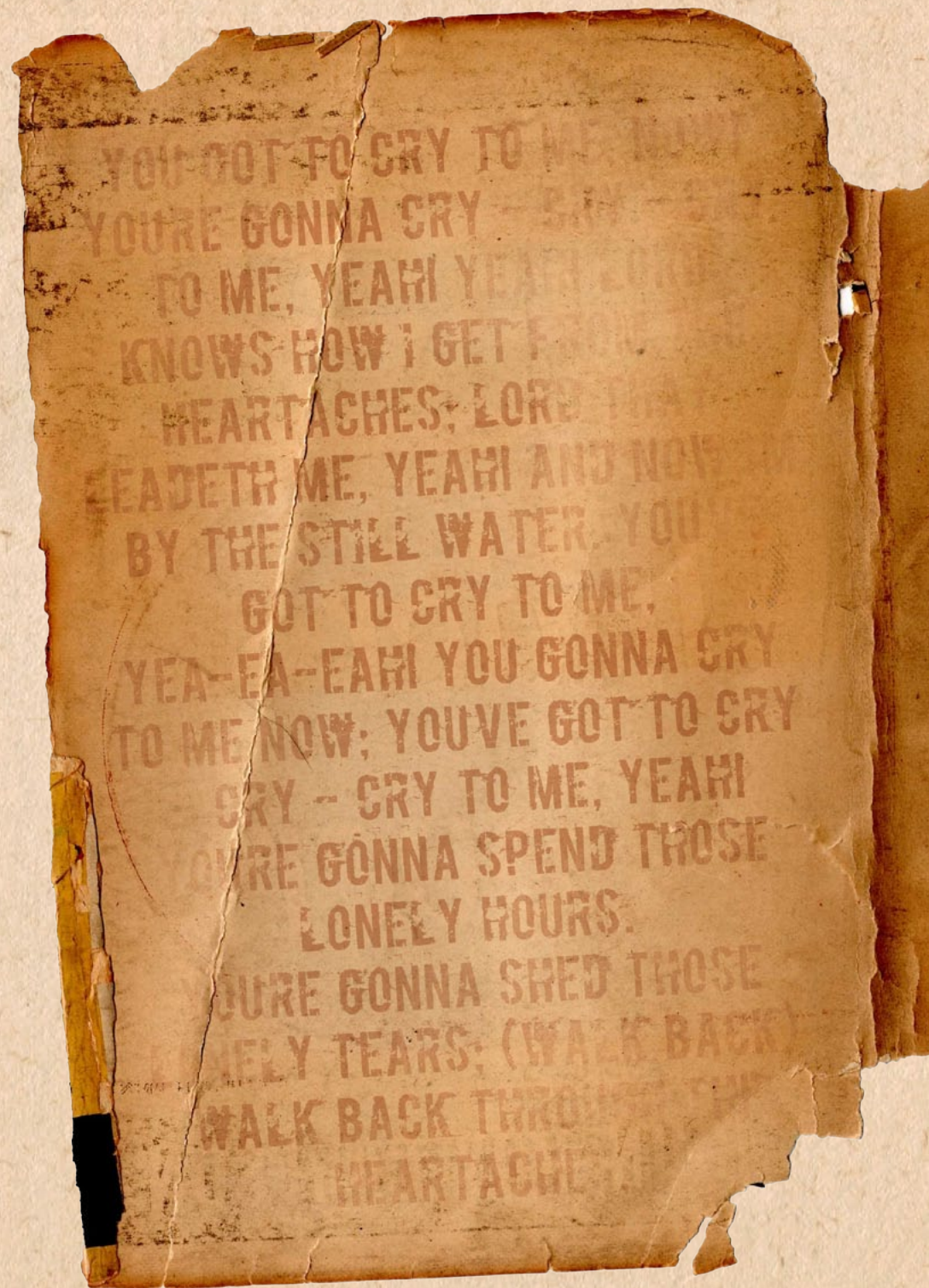
Crenshaw coined the term when she realised that a Black woman was not treated in the same way as Black men and White women. She understood that the feminist movement did not make room for Black women, and the anti-racist movement of her day, did not make space for women. Crenshaw highlighted that Black women have their own unique identity given the fact that gender and ethnicity intersect in their difference of experience, hence the term 'intersectionality'. In her words,

"Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated." ⁽⁴⁾

Crenshaw was bringing to light that Black woman experience racial and sexual discrimination not only simultaneously, but in a compounded manner.

The term intersectionality does not only apply to Black women. Every individual can be categorised by multiple social indicators including, ethnicity, gender, social economic class, religion, geographic location, sexual orientation and education to name a few. In this chapter we are going to be exploring the intersection of ethnicity and disability, as we will be taking an in-depth look into the realities of being Black, disabled and working in the UK.

Poverty Rates	BAME Male	BAME Female	White Male	White Female
Disabled	41.2%	40.8%	25%	23.3
Non Disabled	32,5%	32.6%	16,9%	14.7%



The table above shows poverty rates after housing, looking at ethnicity, disability and gender from 2015-2017. Data was gathered from UK adults aged over 18 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ⁽⁵⁾.

It is important to note that the overall average poverty rate is 19.9%. The table above shows that BAME and Disabled individuals had a higher poverty rate compared to BAME individuals without a disability and their White disabled counterparts. We are using the poverty rate as a proxy for both employment status and salary, assuming that a higher poverty rate is indicative of a higher likelihood of unemployment and payment of lower salaries. The results suggest that the combination of black ethnicity and disability further disadvantaged people economically in the UK. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) suggested that the UK report submitted insufficient data on gender and ethnicity ⁽⁶⁾.

Literature on the intersectionality of Black Disabled people at work

The UN has recommended providing data about disability and other socioeconomic demographics such as race and gender, because they interplay with each other ⁽⁶⁾. In recent times disabled men and women from ethnic minorities have tried to create spaces within the UK's disabled movement, which is led predominantly by White people, and some have described such spaces as racist and lacking interest in the Black experience and input. Over the last 20 years, disability literature has become more inclusive of the experiences of ethnic minorities. Such research was based on the medical model ⁽⁷⁾. According to Trotter et al, there are at least 1 million disabled people from the BAME community. This number is likely to be larger now.

On the whole, the literature on the intersectionality of ethnicity and disability is very sparse ⁽⁸⁾. Research on Black Disabled people's experiences in the job market tends to focus on racism, instead of investigating how the intersectionality of race and disability impacts the individual's experience. Black people experience racism through disability services ^(9, 10).

Black Disabled people have to deal with negative stereotypes and cultural assumptions regarding employment from their own communities and the disability movement, as well as the wider society ⁽⁸⁾. Negative views of disability perpetuated by the medical model of disability have been used as a vehicle to enforce racism in the lives of Black Disabled people ⁽¹¹⁾.

Some research suggests that disabled people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to be recipients of benefits, and disproportionately affected by reduction in benefits from the Government ⁽¹²⁾.

It has been argued that for people who have multiple socially disadvantaged identities, the impact of these obstacles are compounded, rather than just doubled and tripled ⁽¹³⁾.

Black people are more likely to be employed in more dangerous roles, which cause more work-related injuries ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Even though literature from McGregor-Smith and other researchers advocates for improvements in employment of ethnic minorities, disability is not well explored in such literature ⁽¹⁵⁾. Similarly, there is no mention of ethnicity in the National Disability Strategy 2021 ⁽¹⁶⁾. There have been calls for more intersectional research within the disability literature, combining ethnicity and gender studies. Despite the increase in demand for intersectional analysis, there is insufficient literature on the experiences of Black Disabled individuals ⁽¹⁷⁾. In exploring the lives of Black people, there has been a tendency to view Black people as a monolith. Black people are not a homogenous group, and it is this view that excludes individuals with disability when discussing Black people.

Stigma around disability within the Black community implies a reluctance of people of African and Caribbean origins to identify themselves as disabled, chronically ill or otherwise impaired. Consequently, it is difficult to collect adequate data to research the lives of Black and Disabled individuals ⁽⁸⁾.

There is insufficient research of employment discrimination in terms of intersectionality, considering factors such as ethnicity, disability and gender. Current models of disability exclude the experiences of Black people. Racism is a significant difference between the White disabled community and the Black disabled community. Berghs et al (2020) concluded that the success of ableism may be a potential analytical tool that will be dependent on whether all experiences are included in such frameworks, including the experiences of Black people and women ⁽⁸⁾.

Include Me Too is a UK-based charity that supports people with disabilities from all backgrounds, empowering them to become ambassadors and champions of their disabilities within their community. They reported that though a huge number of resources have been allocated for disabled individuals, the needs of BAME disabled people have been neglected ⁽¹⁸⁾. According to the Independent, 90% of BAME voluntary organisations are at risk of closing due to lack of resources, which will cause many who require such services, including Black disabled people, to be negatively affected ⁽¹⁹⁾. #CharitySoWhite estimated that there are approximately 9000-10000 BAME charities and community groups operating in the UK, 65% of which have an average turnover of less than £10k annually. The last 10 years have seen a decrease in the BAME voluntary sector ⁽²⁰⁾.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's research on Black disabled people they found the following:

- Black service users found that mainstream services were at times inappropriate for their needs, due to negative assumptions and prejudices regarding the needs of Black people with disabilities
- These negative stereotypes can cause racial discrimination within mainstream service provision, requiring Black service users to receive culturally competent services
- There are few Black personnel in mainstream disability services
- There was a lack of awareness of services available for Black people. Religious and cultural identities were also very important to the Black community, but mainstream service providers do not pay attention to this
- Black people can also experience discrimination and prejudice from their own religious communities
- Black disabled individuals have multiple identities and support needs due to intersectionality
- Black disabled individuals fall between the gaps as they are neglected by organisations and services that support ethnic minority communities and disabled communities
- People with a disability are frequently faced with low expectations of what they can do. This results in a reduction in their own aspiration and self-confidence
- Disabled people want support to be appropriate, accessible and flexible to suit their lifestyle. Support should be provided for people who ask by the best people to meet their needs. Community organisations should be better positioned to meet these needs

The experience of Black Disabled people at work

The Equalities National Council is a user-led BAME disabled peoples' charity that collaborates with the National Disability Charity to explore the experiences of BAME Disabled people, with a focus group for the experiences of 50 BAME disabled people in the UK ⁽²²⁾. The main conclusion reached was that BAME disabled people had unmet needs. Research was conducted in three phases:

- 1 Statistical analysis of government data sets, such as the Labour Force Survey
- 2 Literature review investigating disability in ethnic communities
- 3 Focus group of 50 Black Disabled people

Their research showed that BAME disabled people are actually less likely to receive benefits than other people in the population. This is because people from ethnic minorities face problems in receiving full benefits, both in understanding the benefits and being awarded the full amounts of benefits.

Participants often reported that disability services were not tailored to cultural backgrounds. Different cultures have a difference in understanding family life and religious beliefs, amongst other variations that may affect the way people from BAME backgrounds engage with services.

Culture is fluid, and if this is not recognised, training can become reductive and stereotyping. It is very important to consider religious understanding of disability.

Some of the challenges of BAME disabled individuals include:

- Communication difficulties and language differences
- Stigma around disability, which is especially acute within ethnic minority groups
- Social isolation
- Migrants who were disabled have particular difficulties in accessing services
- High levels of discrimination

Examples of organisations that support Black Disabled people – from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The organisations below focus on supporting Black and Disabled people in the UK. This list was published in 2005 and refers more to support for the general wellbeing of Black Disabled people, than specific support for Black Disabled people in employment.

Equalities London, Waltham Forest Disabled People's Carers' Partnerships was an initiative aimed at establishing partnerships of Black Disabled people and organisations within the borough. Another goal of the program was to develop a strong community, and a collective voice that would drive the enhancement of local policy, development and service provision ⁽²³⁾. This initiative sought to bring together voluntary groups and statutory services for Black disabled people. They found that national lobbying on behalf of Black Disabled people locally was a more effective strategy than establishing a network of underfunded, disparate Black voluntary sector organisations.

The fact that the definitions of ethnicity and disability vary within the literature makes it harder to conduct research into the Black Disabled landscape within the UK.

Solutions to support Black Disabled people in the UK

Recommendations of service commissioners

Commissioners play a pivotal role in influencing how services are provided in a certain area. These were the recommendations according to Trotter:

- The awareness of disability services should increase via the development of coherent and specific information. Authorities should, with local community groups, help disabled people's organisation and religious centres
- Local authorities work with community groups and disabled people's organisation to develop an effective evidence base about local needs
- Ethnicity descriptors should be included in data collection on disability to make BAME Disabled data more available
- Authorities should set community-led outcomes for service delivery with community group and service providers
- Authorities should direct service commission and enhance the collaboration between small and large organisations to ensure they meet the needs of all disabled individuals ⁽⁷⁾.

Recommendations for service providers

Service providers should do the following:

- Patient Centre - service users should be invited to engage with user-led organisations to better understand the cultural dimensions of person-centred planning and improve the planning process
- Local - service providers should support existing BAME Disabled people to strengthen the relationships between local agencies, to share knowledge more effectively and build capacity to provide better outcomes
- Advocacy - service providers should develop a network of self-advocates who can play a significant role in improving access of services for BAME Disabled people
- Translation – service providers to implement effective and relevant strategies for the community
- Outreach – service providers to cultivate strong relationships with local organisations and hire dedicated outreach workers to play a role in the development of community support networks

This is known as the PLATO model.

Lack of awareness of this support from pro-Black and pro-Disabled organisations

Support from Black Disabled people at work – Black Thrive

Black Thrive conducted a rapid review of scientific literature that explored the effectiveness of each type of employment intervention. Employment interventions were categorised into four groups as follows:

- Supported employment: employees are placed in roles and trained on the job to optimise their effectiveness. A disproportionate number of Black people were not accessing the Individual Placement Support (IPS) and there is insufficient information to suggest that Black people were disadvantaged in the services.
- Transitional employment: Individuals are trained before being placed in employment.
- Pre-vocational support: focuses on equipping individuals with confidence and competence before they have a job. Systematic reviews show that this is a less effective intervention than supportive employment. However, there are potential benefits with this approach, particularly in working with learning disabilities and those with underlying cognitive difficulties.
- Working with employers to break down barriers to employment, and creating networks for potential employees to reduce levels of bullying and discrimination, while achieving improvements in profitability, competitive advantage, inclusive work culture and disability awareness.

The review highlighted the scarcity of literature that investigates the experiences of Black people in accessing employment support services. IPS models were designed for disabled people and are used mainly in severe mental health cases.

Black Thrive highlighted that there is an ethical, social and financial responsibility to provide equal access to all opportunities within the job market, irrespective of quality. They also observed that little is still known about the experience of Black peoples' support services.

Black Thrive recommend that employment support for Black Disabled people should include the following components:

- 1 Peer Support
- 2 Mentoring and coaching
- 3 Teaching about the Equality Act
- 4 Working with employers to model diversity and inclusion

Intersectional employment support for Black Disabled people was identified as essential to a prosperous society, and such interventions must acknowledge how the complexity of intersectionality impacts recipients of the support.

The key recommendations were:

- Employment support services targeted at supporting Black people into employment must be created for and with Black people
- Employment support services must support employers to commit to pro-inclusivity, creating a system that supports a diverse workforce to be the best they can be
- Techniques such as peer support, mentoring and coaching are likely to play a significant role in enhancing the experiences of Black Disabled people at work

The researchers reflected that there is little literature on the experiences of Black Disabled people at work. There are clear inequalities in employment and education, combined with low satisfaction from Black people with services, which show that significant changes need to be made to improve the employment experiences of Black Disabled people. People within the Black community are exhausted with talking about the obstacles they face society. The burden to change should fall on employers, policymakers and service providers, as they are the people who are able to implement the change ⁽²⁴⁾.



First hand experiences of black disabled individuals

When interviewed by Dr Nancy Doyle for Forbes Magazine, Tumi Sotire, the Black Dyspraxic, described his experience of intersectionality: "Living with the intersectionality of being a Black man with dyspraxia presents the challenge of disentangling whether social barriers presented are due to race or neurodivergence. Companies that are inclusive on the grounds of ethnic diversity are not necessarily organisations with neurodivergent staff. Business leaders and human resource specialists need an understanding that if Black male graduates must strive to work twice as hard to climb the career ladder, neurodivergent individuals must work three times as hard. Striving to be 2-3 times better than the average graduate is an ever-present reality. I cannot begin to depict the typical experience for a Black neurodivergent woman. Whilst the truth can be motivating and often inspires me to persevere, for most this is extremely overwhelming. I would appreciate it if business leaders could be more aware of this." (25).

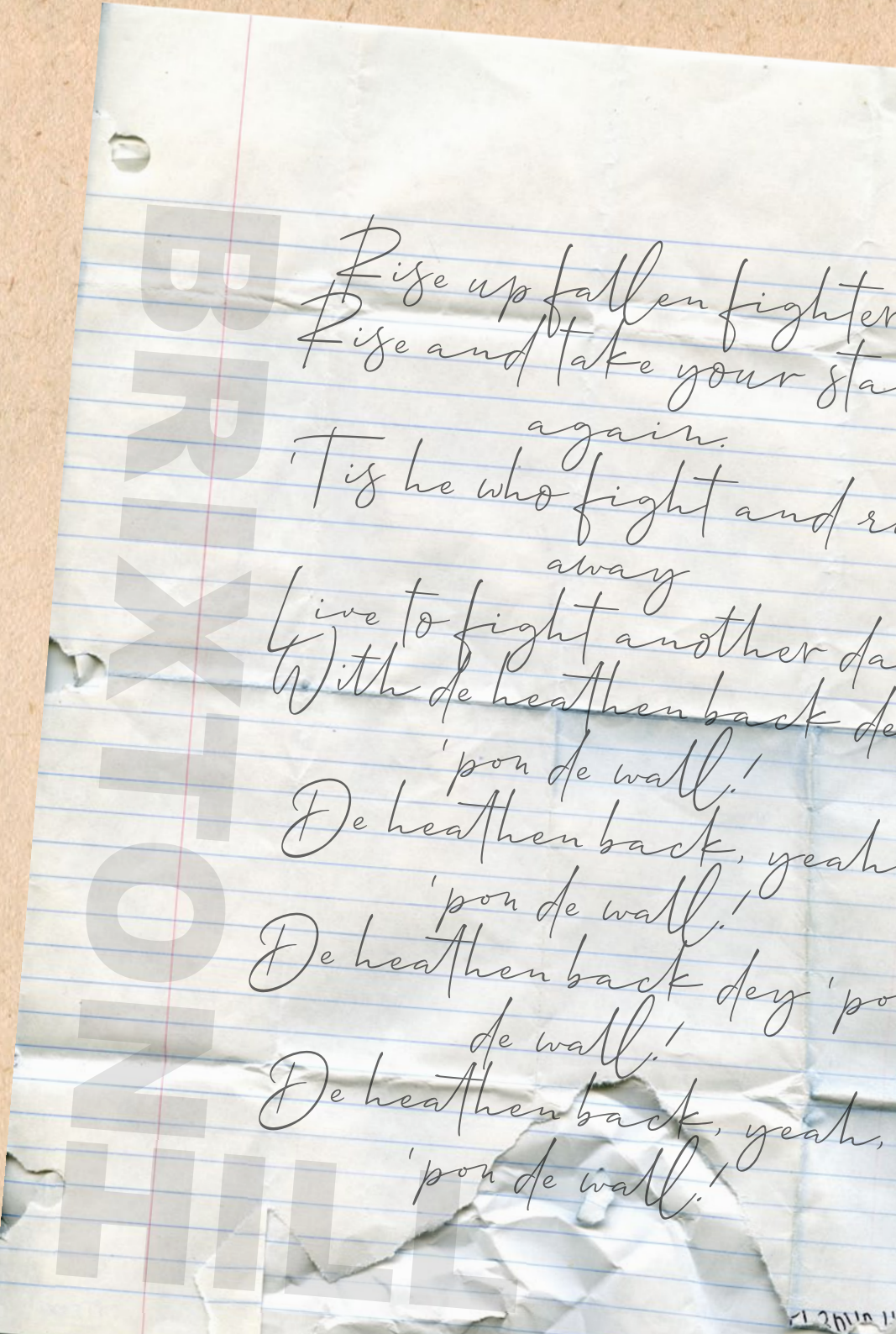
Also in Forbes magazine, Marcia Brissett Bailey talks about the need for more visible dyslexic leaders. If we were to listen more closely to those who specialize in dyslexia, or who tell their lived stories and currently dominate our view of dyslexia (perhaps by looking at publications and social media posts from the mainstream dyslexia and neurodiversity organisations), we would observe a largely Eurocentric perspective on Dyslexia. This is further apparent when you examine the boards of trustees of these organisations, who are frequently selected for their expertise, but lack diversity knowledge, or understanding of cultural, environmental and social barriers facing minority communities. Most of all, they generally lack the lived experience of dyslexic people from minority communities (26).

Disability Organisations are too Eurocentric

Most disability organisations in the UK are still very Eurocentric in their manner of operation. Such institutions would benefit from recruiting BAME representatives. The British Dyslexia Association has a cultural perspective committee, of which Marcia Brissett Baily is a member. The aims of this committee are as follows:

- To influence and contribute to change within the British Dyslexia Association and towards stronger diversity, inclusion and more effective service of the dyslexic community, irrespective of backgrounds
- To influence the equality agenda for diversity and inclusion, facilitating a feeling of belonging in previously neglected communities
- To contribute to policies, ensuring the charity takes account of the multiple cultural communities in the UK
- To assist in and contribute to research around cultural diversity within the dyslexic community, working with external partners
- To dismantle stigma and taboos associated with dyslexia, raising awareness of the condition within ethnic minority communities
- To raise awareness of the varying impact dyslexia has on ethnic minorities in addition to other barriers they face

Other disability organisations should follow the example of the British Dyslexia Association and create divisions specifically focused on advocating for the needs of ethnic minorities within the organisations (British Dyslexia Association). Similarly, Black-focused groups, such as Rare Recruitment and SEO London, also need to cultivate teams within the organisations to maximise their inclusivity. "Racism, Disability, Equality requires authentic leadership from those in positions of power and influence for systematic and structural change. Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic representation at leadership levels in the disability sector, access to platforms and seats around the tables will assist to distribute power and influence for an equitable society" (18).



Rise up fallen fighters
Rise and take your stand

again.
Tis he who fight and re

away
Live to fight another da
With de heathen back de

'pon de wall!
De heathen back, yeah

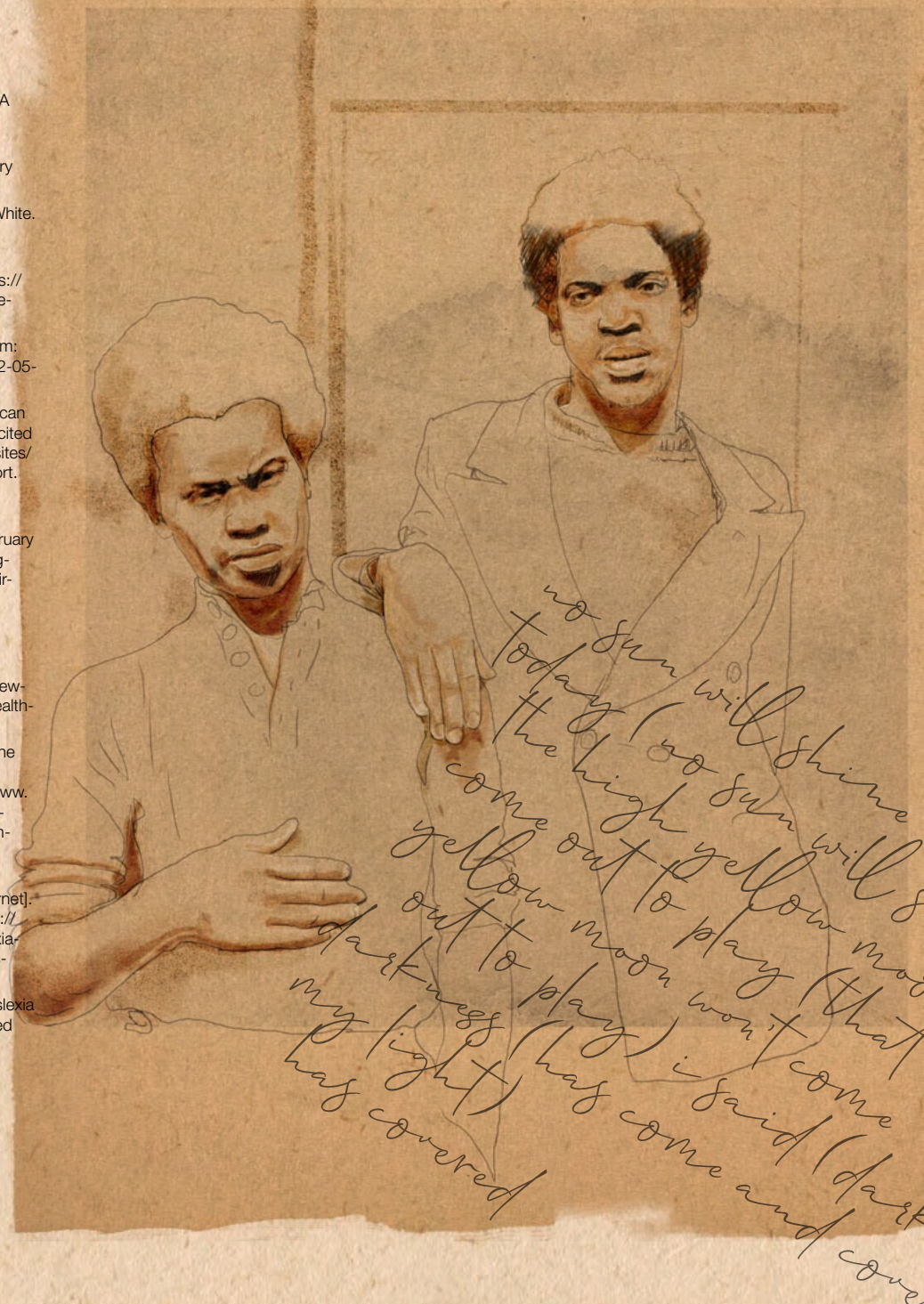
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Chapter 5 Lambeth: The case study

In the previous three chapters, we have looked at the employment and economic inequalities of Disabled individuals, Black individuals and Black Disabled individuals. We have also examined policies, and examples of organisations that aim to reduce these inequalities in the UK. In this chapter, we will review literature on the employment experiences of Black Disabled individuals in the London borough of Lambeth.

Lambeth's demographic

The London borough of Lambeth is situated in the inner city of London. This borough had a population of 326,000 according to the ONS in 2018, of which Black residents make up 37%. This is three times the London average, and ten times the national average of 13% and 3.5% respectively. The percentage of disabled people of working age is similar to the national average at 15%. Lambeth is the eighth most deprived borough in London, and the 22nd most deprived in the UK ⁽¹⁾. In 2020 Lambeth had a population of 70.3% who were in full time employment, and 29.0% . The median annual gross weekly pay was £746.4 ⁽²⁾.

Organisations that support Disabled people in Lambeth

The next section describes organisations that would be of benefit to Black Disabled people in Lambeth.

Disability Advice Service Lambeth

Disability Advice Service Lambeth (DASL) is a local user-led organisation managed by Disabled individuals, that encourages Disabled people to work together. They value diversity, and they support disabled people in Lambeth and other London areas to achieve the following:

- To live according to their legal requirements
- To live with autonomy
- To play an active role in their communities
- To be intentional about personal development
- To have their voices heard and create change

DASL collaborates with Inclusion London and Action on Disability to support Disabled people to become employed, also providing support while they are in work. This initiative supports people who either live or work in Lambeth to find roles and develop key employability skills to be competent in them. This support continues while individuals are employed. They also provide support for employers to develop a more inclusive workplace culture ⁽³⁾.

Inclusion London

Inclusion London supports over 70 disability organisations working across London. By helping these organisations, they support over 70,000 Disabled Londoners, keeping a directory of all of the disability organisations that they work with ⁽⁴⁾.

We are 336

We are 336 is a charity that provides accessible and affordable office space for Disabled people in Lambeth ⁽⁵⁾.

Green Man Skills Zone

In 2018, Green Man Skill Zone partnered with Lambeth Council to support disabled Lambeth residents back into employment. This initiative offers a one-on-one approach that is targeted specifically to unemployed Disabled individuals in Lambeth ⁽⁶⁾.

Black Thrive Global

Black Thrive Global evolved from the Black Thrive Lambeth partnership. It aims to collaborate with individuals, local communities, statutory agencies and organisations to reduce inequalities by breaking down the structural barriers that prevent Black people from thriving. They are focused on promoting and developing Black leaders that will make the impact needed to bring about the positive transformation that will cause people to thrive, instead of just surviving in the UK and beyond. Their philosophy is based on four components ⁽⁸⁾:

- Placing Black communities at the centre
- Collective Community projects
- Embedding race equity in systemic change
- Decolonising the evidence landscape

Black Thrive and the Walcott Foundation

Black Thrive received funding from Guys and St. Thomas' Charity to run a £300k community-led grant programme for the next two years to improve the employment outcomes of Black Disabled people. Black Thrive is walking with community members, statutory bodies and local organisations to improve the wellbeing of communities by funding projects that resonate with the vision of Black Thrive.

Black Thrive received 441 respondents in their survival analysis in Lambeth. They found that COVID-19 did not put Black people at greater strain compared to their White counterparts. The researchers commented that these findings could be due to the nature of the sample, as many within the sample were public sector workers.

Black Thrive conducted research titled 'Equitable recovery from COVID-19'. This piece of research utilised 12 community-based researchers to interview 37 people regarding support for Black Lambeth residents during the pandemic and beyond. The researchers found that working from home has been seen as an escape from "toxic" working environments. Some of the participants saw the pandemic as a great opportunity to consider other streams of income, such as self-employment and entrepreneurship. Their research found that there were three key factors in securing employment for Black people: upskilling individuals, providing access opportunities and ensuring that Black are better represented to decision makers. Black Disabled individuals require support beyond assistance with seeking roles. The research found that adapting work for some participants was difficult, due to living in smaller spaces; some residences were not conducive for work, especially in multiple occupancy households ⁽⁹⁾.

The following recommendations were made for the local government

- People who would like to transition permanently towards working from home should be provided small grants.
- The workforce of local employment services should be diverse in such a way that it demographically reflects the local area.
- An independent organisation that offers specialist wellbeing support for individuals who are disabled or have long term health conditions should be set up. This organisation should also be able to offer expert advice to local employers.
- Ensure all local employers have a wellbeing officer in the workplace
- Ensure all local employers clearly document the transferable skills gained in each job role

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL FUNDERS

- 1 Lambeth network for individuals starting new jobs remotely should be set up.
- 2 Provide support for people who would like to transition into self-employment by providing co-designed, community-led skills training programs
- 3 Produce a digitalised resource hub for self-employment
- 4 Co-design the following:
 - workshops for showcasing job opportunities for young creatives
 - training programmes to increase the capacity of the employment system in Lambeth
 - employment support service provision that is human-cantered
 - community led financial literacy program
 - recruitment process focusing on individual potential and values to attract diverse talent
 - Digital platform supporting people with long term health conditions ⁽⁹⁾

Examples of organisations working with Black Disabled people living in Lambeth

- Work Well is a service operated by the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and is based on Individual Placement Support. This initiative supports individuals with mental health conditions to find work and improve their wellbeing. Work Well provide specialist coaches that meet up with clients monthly. In addition to this they actively work with local employers to promote the hiring of those living with mental illness ⁽¹⁰⁾.
- Mosaic Clubhouse is another example of an intervention that supports Black individuals with mental health conditions in Lambeth, by empowering people to access employment support that enables them to build confidence and develop new skills. Members play an active role in decision-making and governance ⁽¹¹⁾.
- This social enterprise offers paid cleaning work and training to adults who utilise mental health services ⁽¹²⁾.
- Thames Reach focuses on training and educating unemployed people to facilitate employment. They offer a range of services to develop a variety of skills, such as literacy, communication and interview prep ⁽¹³⁾.
- Waterloo Job shop focuses on liaising with local employees to promote local employment, through their journey to work programme. They work with people to develop specific employable skills that are required by local employers ⁽¹⁴⁾.

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Chapter 6 Conclusion and the Homecoming Project

This literature review has thoroughly explored the economic inequalities in the UK's disabled population compared with the general population, finding that Disabled people are less likely to be employed, and more likely to live in poverty. These inequalities, which are further exacerbated by COVID-19, are partly due to society's focus on the medical model of disability.

There are many charities working to provide support for those who identify as Disabled. There are many different types of disability, and disabilities impact people in unique ways. The disabled community is not a homogenous group, and this further increases the complexities of creating effective policies to improve the employment outcomes of Disabled people in the UK. Retaining a job and career progression are just as important as securing a job in the first instance. Action is urgently needed to see an improvement in the working lives of Disabled people, and to ensure that they are lifted out of poverty. Entrepreneurship should not be neglected as a potential vehicle to economically empower the UK's Disabled community. It is not enough to create policies; these policies must be implemented, as action needs to be taken immediately.

In a similar vein, Black people also experience employment inequalities when compared with their White counterparts. Black people have a higher unemployment rate, earn less and are less likely to progress in their career compared to their White counterparts, despite having similar, and in many cases, better educational outcomes. The evidence covered in this review further reinforces the fact that institutional racism exists in the UK. A majority of the ethnicity data lumps Black people in with other ethnic minorities, but the evidence is clear that Black people are economically disadvantaged compared to their White counterparts. There are several stakeholders that aim to reduce economic inequalities for ethnic minorities, and recommendations have been made about how this can be achieved.

Much like Disabled people, Black people are tired of just talking, making recommendations and taking part in research without seeing tangible and significant change for a more equitable workforce.

Considering that both Black people and Disabled people experience employment inequalities, it's not surprising that Black Disabled people have a compounded negative experience within the job market. Without the acknowledgement of intersectionality, the needs of Black people can be neglected in the Disabled community, and the needs of Disabled people can be neglected from the Black community. It is absolutely essential that Black disabled people are no longer ignored. More research is desperately needed to bolster the sparse body of evidence on the employment of Black and Disabled people in the UK. The voluntary sector is heavily whitewashed, and some disability organisations may also not be as welcoming to ethnic minorities. More evidence will increase the likelihood of developing effective strategies for supporting Black Disabled individuals in the UK. More funding is also desperately needed to ensure that these strategies are successfully implemented for the long term. This would truly make the UK more diverse.

The London Borough of Lambeth is a local authority with one of the highest populations of Black people; it is also one of the most deprived areas in the UK. With the percentage of people who are of working age and also disabled in Lambeth similar to the national average, Lambeth is an ideal setting for a case study that would explore the experiences of Black people in the UK. Black Thrive Global are doing exceptional work to improve the lives of Black people within Lambeth to ensure they are the best they can be. Part of this work is conducting research and providing recommendations to improve the lives of Black people. There are also other local organisations that support Black and Disabled people, but more can certainly be done. The Diverse Creative CIC's Homecoming Project stands as the type of initiative that Black Disabled individuals need to assist them into the workplace.

THE SUN IS SHINING. THE
WEATHER IS SWEET.
MAKE YOU WANT TO
MOVE YOUR DANCING
FEET TO THE RESCUE,
HERE I AM
WANT YOU TO KNOW,
Y'ALL, WHERE I STAN