

# **Consultation**

**with**

# **Ethnic Minority People And Groups In West Dorset**

**2004**

**West Dorset District Council**

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## **Biography**

### **Ebi Sosseh, Freelance Consultant**

Originally born in Poole, Ebi Sosseh has lived in Dorset for nearly twenty years. He spent his childhood years in The Gambia, West Africa, but returned to the UK to study for a degree in Hospitality and Catering Management in Ealing, West London.

In 2002, Ebi formed the Dorset African-Caribbean Association to act as a social and community group to help support people new to the area to settle in. It was during this time that Ebi noticed the gap in support for ethnic minority people and groups and in 2003 he was commissioned by the Dorset Race Equality Council to work on the report 'Racism and the Dorset Idyll'. Employed as a Community Development worker he has worked on a number of research projects and supported the development of minority ethnic groups across the county of Dorset.

A member of the South-West Multi-Cultural Networking Group, Ebi helped the group to constitute itself, successfully bid for funds and coordinated the Group's quarterly newsletter. In September 2004, Ebi liaised with West Dorset District Council to develop the Internet information resource web pages for ethnic minority people and groups.

In 2004, Ebi set up his own consultancy, Baobab Consultancy, to specialise in developing diversity in Dorset.

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## Summary

The report is the result of nine months consultation with black and ethnic minority people and groups across West Dorset. The findings are presented from two types of methodology: questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. A total of 87 people, across all age groups, participated.

The report provides both statistical data from the questionnaires and qualitative findings from the face-to-face interviews. The report is summarised with recommendations on services provided by West Dorset District Council and other services such as healthcare, education and community safety.

A copy of the report findings will be given to managers in West Dorset District Council to help shape future policy and service delivery. The key focus of the report is to raise awareness of the services provided by the council to residents and to improve access to information and services.

A full response to the actions taken forward from the report by West Dorset District Council will be published in May 2005.

A copy of the report will be given to other service delivery organisations, highlighted in the report, to help improve multi-agency and partnership initiatives.

The report can be viewed or downloaded from the council's website, and is saved as a Word file.  
[www.westdorset-dc.gov.uk/ethnicminority](http://www.westdorset-dc.gov.uk/ethnicminority)

## Introduction

The District Council commissioned freelance consultant, Ebi Sosseh to research the needs of ethnic minority people in West Dorset.

The aim of the consultation was to improve the District Council's knowledge about the local and sparsely populated ethnic minority population and to identify how the council could improve equality of access to services

In 2003 the district council published its Race Equality Scheme and three year action plan, which sets out how the council will implement the duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The general duty of the Act requires all local authorities is to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between people of different racial group

One of the key actions from the Race Equality Scheme 'Action Plan' was the need to consult locally and identify the needs and concerns of the local ethnic minority population. The Scheme further sets out how local authorities will plan, respond to and publish the results of the consultation.

The Community and Economic Partnerships Team at the District Council worked with Ebi Sosseh to draw up a brief to carry out the consultation over a nine-month period.

The Brief:

- To map the ethnicity of respondents
- Raise the awareness and experience of ethnic minority people accessing council services
- Identify the needs of ethnic minority people
- Create a database of ethnic minority people to participate in further consultation with the council.

Traveller/Gypsy communities were not consulted in this piece of research, as the consultant did not have the contacts or knowledge in this area. The district council will develop an approach in the coming year to identify service delivery needs for the Traveller/Gypsy families and communities; a significant ethnic group in West Dorset. Traveller/Gypsy people are covered by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The Consultant:

It was vital that the consultation process used appropriate and culturally sensitive methods to gain the trust and confidence of the local population and the participants.

Ethnicity in West Dorset

The 2001 census reveals that 96.7% of West Dorset's population classed themselves as 'white British'. Of the other 3.3%, 2% classed themselves as 'white Irish' or 'white other'. The other 1.3% classed themselves as 'Mixed, Asian, Asian British, Black, Black British, Chinese or Other' ethnicity.

## Methodology

The information gathered for this research project was collected through the use of both questionnaires and qualitative face-to-face interviews. West Dorset District Council's Community Facilitator and the researcher identified the topics to be covered through assessing the needs identified within the Citizen' Panel research; carried out by the district council and also through existing work with ethnic minority groups in the area.

Initially letters were sent out to various groups and individuals including those that had attended the multi cultural networking event in Dorchester, members of the Islamic community in Dorchester, schools with a high number of ethnic minority pupils and Indian and Chinese restaurants. The letter contained information about the research consultation and they were asked if they would like to participate in this project. They were also asked to share this information with other ethnic minority people or groups that they knew.

The next step was to send out questionnaires to the people identified. The questionnaire asked about the person's details such as nationality, length of time in the area and also about issues such as access to district council services, education and the police. 67 questionnaires were filled in and returned for this research project. A copy of this questionnaire can be seen in Appendix One.

The other research method used was the semi- structured qualitative face-to-face interviews. 80 interviews were carried out in total and they therefore make up the main body of the report. These interviews were carried out with the use of subject prompts. An example of these can be seen at Appendix Two; each interview lasted for up to an hour.

Visits to schools were also conducted so that the research could benefit from information given by younger members of the black and ethnic minority community. The young people filled out a specially designed questionnaire. (Appendix Three)

Some of the restaurant staff were not able to speak English fluently, so the owner or manager often interpreted on their behalf to overcome any language barriers.

Problems encountered in the research included the difficulty of interviewing people at the right time. Some were too tired after work or not available during normal working days, many people were away during the month of August, and some were generally suspicious about talking about themselves. The fact that nearly all the interviewees were being consulted for the first time meant that many of them wanted to talk about all aspects of their lives, not just about subject matters relevant to the district council. The respondents were provided with the topics in advance so that they could gather their thoughts before the interview.

The break down of responses was as follows:

Questionnaires completed: 67

Qualitative interviews completed: 80

Young People interviewed: 16

Many of the people that completed a questionnaire also participated in the qualitative interviews.

The scope of the research was as follows:

<b>Areas</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Research venue</b>
Dorchester Warmwell Bridport Crossways Sherborne Beaminster Weymouth Chideoke Abbotsbury	African African Caribbean Iraqi Iranian Japanese Turkish Jewish South & SE Asian White & Mixed race	Home School Work Social Gatherings

The research participants lived or worked in the following areas in West Dorset:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Amount of participants (%)</b>
Dorchester	52%
Bridport	23%
Sherborne	9%
Beaminster	7%
Other (Crossways, Warmwell, Cerne Abbas)	9%

Length of time participants have lived in West Dorset:

0-12 months	1-3 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10 years and more
16	24	18	21	8

The research was carried out with full consideration of the participants' diversity and their particular language needs. All of the research was carried out between February and September 2004. My thanks goes out to all those who helped by taking part.

## Questionnaire Results

The following is the feedback from the 67 questionnaires completed. All figures have been transferred into percentages for easier reference. The questions are listed in the same order as the questionnaire.

### What do you like about living in West Dorset?

- Good place for children to grow up in 74%
- Safety from crime 70%
- Quietness compared to other cities 61%
- Opportunities of work 52%
- The beautiful countryside 52%
- The fresh air 39%
- Being made to feel special 39%
- Friendliness of local people 37%

### What don't you like about living in West Dorset?

- Isolation from culture 70%
- Limited public transport 70%
- Racist jokes and taunts 70%
- Lack of social activities 70%
- Ignorance about other people's cultures 65%
- Lack of cultural activities they can identify with 57%
- Unfriendliness of locals 48%
- Limited job market 33%

### Name 3 things West Dorset District Council can do improve your quality of life in the area?

- More information about services 70%
- Providing staff training about cultural differences 70%
- Having workshops about different services 70%
- Community safety 24%
- Improving access to its services 18%

## Have you got access to appropriate services?

64% said yes

29% said no

7% not sure about question

100% of those who answered 'no' think that there are some needed services that are not available in the area, such as immigration advice.

## What can be done to make services easier to access and understand?

- Having introductory talks about different services 70%
- Information in simpler English 70%
- Information in relevant languages 40%
- Easy access to internet facilities 33%
- Meeting service managers 15%
- Consultation at policy development stages 10%

## In terms of importance, what services would you like to have most support and advice about?

- Employment 86%
- Advice on benefits 86%
- Health 72%
- Immigration 65%
- Education 65%
- Community safety 60%
- Housing & landlords 57%
- Sports and leisure 49%
- Business support 29%
- Legal 22%
- Social services 20%
- Social events/participation 17%

### **Any other services**

- Funeral arrangements 9%
- Arts 15%

### **Have you got equal access to West Dorset District Council services?**

All responded, yes. Everybody asked said that they had never been refused access to any of the services.

### **Awareness about the District Council**

- 24% of participants feel that the way the Local Authorities operate can alienate ethnic minorities.
- All of the restaurants were happy with their relationship with Environmental Health Team.
- 48% felt there was a language barrier in terms of accessing advice and support from other council services.
- 33% felt that staff were not always sensitive to people's cultural differences.
- 58% agreed that the majority of staff are polite, but not necessary competent about sourcing information on behalf of those who need it.

### **In the last two years have you been a victim of any of the following:**

Racial Abuse	Racial violence	Vandalism/graffiti	Racist jokes	None
9%	2%		62%	27%

Most of the respondents have said that, even though they have not suffered any or only some of the above, their children have reported incidents of name-calling and racial bullying.

### **Do you know where to report any kind of racist incident?**

- 70% said yes (the police)

### **Would you report a racist incident?**

- 67% yes
- 33% no

**Those who answered 'no' gave some of the following reasons:**

- Shame 14%
- Stigma 7%
- Bad for business 7%
- Lack of witnesses 3%
- Afraid 2%

**What type of issues do you face when you visit your local hospital or doctor?**

- Language problems 34%
- Lack of cultural awareness on behalf of the doctor 10%
- Patronising attitude 5%
- Lack of information in other languages 5%

**What type of issues do you face when you apply for a job in West Dorset?**

- No problems 37%
- Unfriendly and unhelpful attitude 26%
- Lack of patience from employers at interviews 7%
- Lack of local transport 1%

**What type of social activities would you like to see in the area?**

- Multi cultural events 48%
- Multi cultural festival 30%
- Any event in which locals can get involved in as well 16%
- World music events 14%
- International film nights 3%

35% said they would like to participate in organising events. A further 10% of those who replied to the questionnaires said 'yes' to meeting again to discuss issues raised in more detail.

**Demography of Questionnaire Respondents**

- The vast majority of people interviewed live in the Dorchester and Bridport areas.
- 33% of those who responded have lived in West Dorset between one year and five years.

- The majority of respondents work in West Dorset and are involved in the restaurant business.
- 70% of the respondents are male and the majority are between the ages of 23 and 40.
- The countries of origin have varied widely from Malaysia, Kenya, Bangladesh and Iran. There are no significant majorities in the West Dorset area.

## Findings from the Qualitative Interviews

The following findings encapsulate the views as presented through the qualitative interviews. In total 80 different adult views are represented and an additional 16 views from ethnic minority young people.

### **Awareness about the District Council's Services**

The aim of this topic area was to discover what people knew about district council services and how they can provide feedback on what the district council needs to achieve in order to meet its service plan targets.

There seemed to be the general impression that the way the council operates can alienate ethnic minorities. This is mainly because little is known about what the district council does for ethnic minorities in the area. The fact that many have felt excluded in decision-making process has made some of the respondents feel less positive about the district council in general.

'How much we are looked after will depend on how many of us they think live in the area. If they (the council) think that we are not many in numbers, they will not see us as value for money in terms of adjusting their services to what we want.'

There was a language barrier in terms of accessing advice and support from services. This problem affected people at varying levels. Some people could not understand regional accents; some had difficulties due to complicated use of language and some because of their own poor standard of English.

### **Employment**

Employment was one of the top priorities identified by ethnic minorities in the area. The discussions focused on discovering how much people knew about where to go for advice and job opportunities, as well as exploring different experiences in the workplace.

Everybody interviewed knew where his or her local job centre was. Over 50% of the respondents have had very positive feedback from the staff. This 50% had little or no problem with their English.

Those with language barriers have complained about a lack of patience from the staff in dealing with their enquiries and this has led to some tense situations at times.

Most of the people interviewed had no complaints about discrimination in the workplace. Although there was some suspicion of covert racism which is difficult to prove, such as inequalities of pay and career advancements.

There has been a tendency for employers not giving respondents enough time at interview level. They are being processed too quickly. Respondents have wondered whether it is because of their communication skills, their colour or their suitability in general.

Regarding applying for work within West Dorset, on the whole, the responses were quite positive. Many people felt that they have been dealt with fairly and the right procedures were followed through the recruitment process. However, some have felt that application forms that had been promised were not always sent out, also there were incidences when the respondents have felt that staff showed a lack of patience with them. Some of the respondents also stated that sometimes lack of adequate transport did stop them from applying for work.

- 84% of those who responded say they know where the job centres are located.
- 49% of those with no language barriers have described the staff at employment centres as very helpful. Some of those with language barriers have described the staff as impatient.
- 84% of those interviewed have not experienced any discrimination in the work place.
- 29% felt that not enough time had been spent with them at the interview stage for jobs they have applied for.
- 9% have reported instances when application forms have not been sent to them as promised

### **Business Support**

The feedback mainly came from ethnic minority restaurants in West Dorset. There was a general apathy about the subject matter mainly due to the lack of awareness and also to the assumption that business clubs are exclusive.

- The majority of ethnic minority businesses in West Dorset do not know there are business clubs in the area. Those who have heard about them do not know how to play a part in the business clubs.
- Ethnic minority restaurants have little contact with staff from the district council connected with business support.

### **Crime and Disorder**

This section was divided up in order to provide more direction for the respondents. The answers were again influenced by how long people had lived in the area and also by how much awareness these people had about the subject matter.

Many of the restaurant staff could not relate to this section due to their sometimes-cocooned existence of working long hours and not having enough contact with the wider population, there was therefore a lot of prompting from the interviewer.

### **Community safety**

- 70% of respondents are happy in the area and feel safe.
- 24%, however, expressed concern about BNP activities in the area and enquired about the council's response. Many of the people interviewed were aware of the press coverage about BNP activities in the area in regard to EU elections. The lack of information about what impact this activity could possibly have on people was a worry to many. The comments attributed to some local councilors in the area, regarding the BNP, did not help in allaying fears and concerns.

- 52% of respondents feel that their children are safe in the area. The children interviewed have agreed with this statement. Many of the families from ethnic minority backgrounds enjoy the fact that there is a low risk of their children being involved in harmful activities frequently associated with more densely populated areas.

### Police

- 12% of respondents felt that the police are mainly negative or slow in dealing with complaints when it involves ethnicity. Many incidences of racism have no witness, which makes it difficult for the police to prosecute. This leaves victims of racist activities feeling frustrated and bitter.
- 18% of respondents perceived that the police are reluctant to, or are ignorant about, how to advise ethnic minorities about their rights.
- 35% of respondents are aware of the positive work Dorset police are doing in terms of Race Equality. Also the majority of respondents were aware of where to report incidences and have seen or received information from the Dorset Crime Reduction Partnership.

### Nuisance

- 45% are concerned about 'yobbish behaviour' within the restaurant areas. Whilst people are aware about where to report incidences, there is negativity about how it will be dealt with. There seems to be a feeling of 'second class' citizenship, which makes some of the victims of nuisance less likely to complain.
- 30% of householders are fearful that in future their 'idyllic tranquility' could be eroded. These responses came from those who have been living in the area for a long time and have a genuine affinity with the area.
- 70% had no 'nuisance' incidents to report.

### Racism

74% of those who responded have experienced racial abuse, racial violence or racist jokes in the last 2 years. Racist jokes have made up the majority of incidents.

'I have walked into a bar where the doorman was in the middle of a racist joke. The doorman immediately clammed up when he saw me. That did not stop him though, as he pushed for the punch line. Unfortunately for him his two person audience quickly lost interest in the 'joke' on seeing me and walked off'. Black male.

There have been only two cases of racial violence amongst those sampled and both times it was alcohol related. The general worry was that incidents of racism, of any kind, could escalate if the authorities do not take them seriously enough.

Even though most people knew where to report of racist incidents, some did indicate that they would not report incidents if it happened to them.

'If it's not a 'big deal', I will let it pass'. Portuguese male

'I don't want to cause any fuss.' Bangladeshi male

Some of the respondents felt they could be stigmatised if they reported a racist incident. These people felt that they have worked hard to integrate and to report an incident could be quite 'shameful' or embarrassing for them, especially if it involves someone in the local community.

Four of the restaurant owners did not want to report racist incidents by customers as they deemed it potentially bad for business. There was also a fear of being targeted in future. Most incidents have involved racial taunts, customers refusing to pay or being abusive and telling the owner and staff to 'leave our country'.

- 60% of the respondents have expressed feeling some sense of isolation at varying times in their lives. This has often taken the form of not been made to feel welcome, being looked at with suspicion, indifferent attitudes to them and thus reinforcing views that they are being treated as such because they look different.
- 6% of respondents, especially from African Caribbean backgrounds, have always felt that they have been made to feel welcome.
- 8% of respondents have felt marginalised because of their visibly different skin.
- 65% of the young people and school children, who participated, have experienced some form of racism in West Dorset.
- Muslim women in particular have been the subjects of verbal racial abuse and four participants have reported being spat at.
- Black people in particular have often been subjected to negative and patronising stereotypes and outdated ideas.

### **Community Groups and Community Development**

The emergence of the Southwest Dorset Multi Cultural Network set up by West Dorset District Council and Dorset Race Equality Council has raised awareness of what is happening in the area in terms of community development for ethnic minority people. Participants have begun to see how they can take part in the community activity according to their own needs and wants.

Due to the diversity of the ethnic minority people in the area, most of the people thought that it would be very difficult for a single group to serve all the people in the area. Although they still recognised the importance of having a group to act as a focal point for the ethnic minority people in the area.

The majority of people felt that the district council should work more closely with them in terms of integration with other associations and groups in the area.

- 56% have had contact with the district council Community Facilitator.
- 49% of respondents have said that they would rather be part of an existing local community group than develop one of their own.

61% of those who were interviewed did not belong to any community groups or groups connected with their cultural backgrounds in the area. The reasons cited involves the following:

- Not enough leisure time

- Little awareness of what is available
- There is no need, very happy to integrate with the local community
- Locals assuming that they will not be interested
- Lack of ethnic minority community development work in the area.

### **Leisure and Tourism**

The majority of respondents have found it easy to access information on leisure and tourism facilities in the area. The majority knew where the tourist information offices were and how to ask for relevant information.

The majority of the inquiries mainly centered about where they can take their visiting friends and family, in terms of attractions. Respondents cited the Tutankhamen exhibition as a popular place of visit. Participants have also visited some of the attractions themselves. Visits to countryside attractions such as parks and forests were rare, except for picnicking. Most of the people however made regular visits to the seaside in the summer.

The majority of the people felt that they did receive information on tourist attractions in the area, but due to work commitments and cultural differences, many did not make use of such facilities. The reasons vary from not having the time, not being familiar with the area, lack of finance to 'nothing that interests me at the moment'.

#### **Tourism**

- 61% of respondents have found it easy to access information about facilities.
- 63% of respondents do not visit the tourist attractions in this area.
- 38% of those who had visited tourist attractions reported very positive responses from staff.

#### **Leisure**

- Some of the Muslim community feel that there are inadequate swimming facilities for them in terms of segregation for men and women.
- 69% of the young people interviewed felt that there were not enough facilities for them.
- 25% of respondents cited transport and working patterns as the main barrier to accessing leisure facilities.

The majority of the respondents related to this section in regards to finding information about leisure and tourism facilities in the area. Feedback was more forthcoming from people who had been in the area for a long time or from people who had relatives and friends who visit them.

The issue about what type of social activities people would like to see in the area was enthusiastically answered by nearly all those asked, their ideas included; multi cultural festivals, world music events, international film nights and any events in which locals can also be involved.

These were exciting comments to arise, however many felt unable to help in organising events, mainly because of their demanding lifestyles. They felt that due to the complexities of some of these events, it would be better if a specialised or dedicated person could help to organise events on their behalf.

## **Housing and Accommodation**

This section focuses on the participant's thoughts on housing needs and services in West Dorset. People from ethnic minority backgrounds, who have moved into the area from bigger cities, do see a lack of choice in terms of housing. Single men in particular find it hard to secure rented accommodation in the area.

The rising price of houses has been expressed as a concern among people interested in entering the housing market. Lack of knowledge of the housing market and potential options available proved to be a barrier for many when trying to enter the housing market.

Three of the respondents have experienced racial abuse at their council accommodation in Bridport. They have, however, said that it was not a common occurrence and they are aware of where to report incidences.

Twenty-three people who responded have found it difficult to understand the information regarding housing benefits and what they might be entitled to. Some have found the English hard to understand and even though the lack of translators has been a problem at times, the majority of people would prefer the information to be simplified into plain English instead of being translated into different languages.

Finding private accommodation to rent is particularly difficult for those who are new to the area. The main problem is finding suitable people to act as referees. Those new in the area probably have not been employed yet, or made long term friends and so therefore are unable to provide suitable documentation for the potential landlord.

- 29% of respondents found that accessing private rented accommodation is hard when new in the area.
- 23% stated that they struggle to find out where to go for benefit advice.
- 31% cited lack of translators as a barrier to housing access and information.
- 13% felt there was a lack of choice in the housing market.
- 8% are worried about the current housing market.
- 11% of respondents felt that there is a lack of information about different housing options available in West Dorset.
- 3% have experienced discrimination from council tenants in the area.

## **Advice**

Most of the participants empathised with the need for seeking advice and were aware of the location of the Citizen's Advice Bureaus, which are perceived as the main avenue for people to find information on issues that affect their lives.

There is a perception that some of the staff seemed insensitive or not knowledgeable about their enquiries. People have gone to the advice centre with the assumption that staff know everything about their lives and cultural backgrounds. When this expectation does not get fulfilled, the clients were left feeling disappointed. Some staff at advice services, have struggled to gain enough information about the advice that some of the ethnic minorities were seeking. Immigration advice and residential status were cited as the main issues that information was required for.

Some of the respondents feel that it would be beneficial if staff at these services could undertake diversity training.

- 61% of the respondents know where the Citizens' Advice Bureau is.
- However 44% have found the staff to be occasionally insensitive or not knowledgeable about their needs.
- 66% feel that there is a general lack of provision and knowledge about immigration issues in the West Dorset area.
- 26% of respondents felt that the lack of a translation service could be a barrier to access advice.

## **Sport**

Even though the majority of the people interviewed did not participate in sport, they all agreed that sport was a great way of breaking down barriers and integrating with people and would certainly support and participate in any new sport initiatives in the area.

Although the restaurant staff had very limited free time, some of them still belonged to cricket clubs, chess clubs and local football teams.

Most of the respondents are aware of where the sporting facilities are, but time is always too limiting for them to participate. The young ethnic minority people were very happy with the sport provision at school although they do not seem to participate in sporting activity as much as their white counterparts. This is generally due to family commitments and therefore they do not participate in after school activities as much as other pupils.

Six ethnic minority young people have reported incidents of racial taunts at Dorset County football matches and this had tended to cause the parents to withdraw the affected young people from participating in these games.

- 79% have said that sport is a very good way of bringing people together and would support community sports events being developed.
- 9% of the restaurant staff, that participated in the research, belong to clubs such as Dorchester cricket club, chess clubs and others.

- 76% think that the sports facilities are adequate within West Dorset.
- However 80% of respondents do not participate in active sports.

## **Young People**

As part of the consultation the researcher interviewed 16 young people of ethnic minority backgrounds in order to formulate their views and experiences of living in West Dorset. The following comments were made:

‘A teacher is giving a lecture to pupils about headwear and when it came to bandanas, the teachers told the 9 year old students that ‘bandanas are what black rappers wear’. The pupil was bewildered and questioned whether bandanas ‘were only worn by black people’. Young mixed race boy.

‘Most people did automatically assume that I did not speak English and would start to speak very slowly, without finding out about me first’. Asian female.

‘A young mixed race boy proudly goes to his friend next door to show off his new trainers. His friend takes one look at them and turns round and tells his friend ‘my dad says these shoes are no good....they are nigger shoes’.’ Young Black male.

Most of the young people interviewed however have a sense of belonging in the area. Some of them see the race issue as an occupational hazard of living in a predominantly white area, whilst some of the other young people could not fully grasp the context of the issues presented to them.

## **Education**

The section asked questions about the school curriculum, issues around racism, awareness of support systems, adult education and career advice.

Some of the parents have felt helpless in terms of having an influence about their children’s schooling. These parents feel that the school rarely consults them. They have found it hard to attend parent/teacher meetings, mainly because of unsuitable hours and language barriers. These comments were made by participants who have lived in the area for less than three years and who seemed to be experiencing low levels of confidence due to language barriers and lack of information on how to participate in their children’s schooling.

Participants with an international background, born in the UK or a white parent with mixed race children have found the education system and curriculum to be adequate apart from a few concerns about racist behaviour from other pupils and occasionally the staff.

Many of the parents that participated in the consultation expressed a concern at the lack of multi cultural information on the curriculum and the competence of schools in dealing with racist incidences and the effects of racism on pupils. There was a general perception, from both parents and pupils, that schools were inadequate in dealing with incidences of racism and often these were handled unsatisfactorily, with punishments seen as too lenient.

The majority of the respondents, especially among the restaurant staff, have no idea about adult education and what to do or where to go if they wanted to engage in a course. Some of the restaurant staff indicated that they would like to study information technology, but due to lack of information and support, they have been unable to realise these aspirations. The researcher has now linked some of the restaurants with a language school that offers free English language classes.

- 28% of ethnic minority parents interviewed felt helpless in terms of having an influence about how their child is schooled. The reasons for this were cited as language or cultural barriers, not helped by the way schools currently operate.
- 18% reported considerable negative stereotyping of ethnic minority children at school.
- 46% have reported instances where insensitive or racist teaching materials have been used.
- 63% of parents and pupils did not think that schools are able to deal effectively with racist bullying.
- 16% of the pupils interviewed felt that the punishments given out to pupils found guilty of racist incidents were too lenient.

## **Health**

The intention was to find out if there are any issues regarding people and health access within the local black and ethnic minority community and whether people feel they have received fair and adequate treatment.

The majority of the respondents were well aware of the location of health facilities in their area. Most of them knew friends or relatives working in such facilities.

When they have used such services, most of the ethnic minority people have had no problem in accessing translation services, due to the ethnic diversity of the staff. It was emphasised however that these translators were not always of the standard required to understand medical issues and terms fully.

The researcher then asked about what type of issues ethnic minority people face in West Dorset when they visited their local Health Centres or doctors. The main issue stated was the language barrier. Most of the doctors found it hard to simplify their English to a level to suit some of their ethnic minority patients. Some of the respondents also found the health staff to be too intrusive about their private lives, 'too much like an immigration officer', was what one said.

- 75% of interviewees know where the health facilities are.
- All of the respondents were happy with the way they had been treated by health care staff.
- There has been no shortage of translators at the hospitals due to the diversity of staff.
- 60% stated that they were generally unaware of what they are entitled to from the NHS.

## Ethnic Minority Experiences of Living in West Dorset

The interviewees seemed grateful for the opportunity to give a balanced view of their experiences and lives in the area. There were a great variety of responses and this was enriched by the length of time people have lived in the area. The following contains some of the main points that respondents made through the consultation process about living and working in West Dorset.

Most of the people who have moved into the area said they liked the scenery and the beautiful countryside. 'A good place for children to grow up in', was a common view held by many. Some said that living in West Dorset gave them a sense of tranquility, especially in comparison to other more urban places that they had lived in before.

The low crime rate in the area was also appealing as well as the chance to experience English life and culture. Some of the people liked the opportunities for work that the area presented.

The replies about what people did not like about the area were also very varied and often did not reflect the area as a whole, but more impacted upon on the type of lifestyles that the respondents wanted to have in the area. These were:

- Isolation from their own culture
- Unfriendliness of locals
- Ignorance about their culture
- Limited job market
- Lack of social activities
- Lack of cultural activities they can identify with
- Racist jokes and taunts
- Limited public transport

The replies given within this section were not held by the majority of respondents, nor did the interviewees expand upon them. Some of the people found it difficult to talk at length about negative aspects of living in the area.

The respondents were asked to write down three things that the district council could do improve their quality of life in West Dorset. The first problem encountered with this question was that the majority of the ethnic minority people did not know what the district council does (58%). They are generally aware of the services, but could not clearly identify who provided what in relation to Dorset County Council, the District Council and the Town Councils.

Some responses were gauged on these questions after being given information by the researcher and also by the fact that most of the British born ethnic minorities knew something about who provided which services. The following reflects the overall responses:

- There was a general feeling that there should be more information about services available. Some of the respondents, due to their status in the area or a lack of awareness of how to be part of the electoral roll, have found themselves not receiving enough information about council services.
- The need for more simplified way of knowing what is available in terms of services and where to access them. The majority of people, who responded, thought it was more important for the district council to simplify the English in the information materials than to provide interpreters at all public information areas.

- The issue of community safety was a common theme when it came to matters about the quality of life in the area. Though the majority felt safe in the area although there was still the worry of organised racism creeping into the area.
- The majority of the people who were interviewed and or filled in questionnaires suggested that staff at local services should have diversity training in order to be more aware about other people's culture.
- Nearly all of those interviewed have said that they have been able to access services and resources in the area. Although it was reported that service staff were, on occasion, intolerant and impatient, when ethnic minority people were trying to access information or services.

The question was then asked about what the District Council could do to improve its service delivery in terms of accessibility. Here are some of the comments:

- Appropriate information to be multi-lingual or to have interpreters available.
- Information about services to be in simplified English. Jargon should not be used.
- Consultation at policy development stages. Some of the respondents would like to participate in the process of developing new initiatives. Some have felt that their expertise is under utilised in the area and some feel that their international experiences could be of benefit to the local community.
- Meeting service managers and having introductory talks about different services. Some respondents wished to meet with policy makers and department heads. Some have said that meeting with people from the council does boost their self-esteem and makes them feel more valued within the community.

When the respondents were asked to list, in terms of priority, which services they feel they would most like to have support and information about, the replies were as follows:

- Information related to employment was the top priority for the interviewees. Many said that when they moved to the area, knowing where the job centres and employment agencies were located was paramount to them. Information about benefits relating to employment was also seen as important.
- 72% of respondents thought it was important to know where health facilities are and what they are entitled to.
- Immigration advice and community safety issues also featured as high priority issues.

Overall it was perceived that none of the participants have been unable to access council services on the grounds of race and ethnicity. Although there have been comments that staff have been impatient and sometimes aloof, but no one within this consultation has been denied access to services.

## Isolation and marginalisation

The following are just some of the general views that have been expressed in relation to how people from ethnic minority backgrounds have felt in terms of being isolated or victimised in West Dorset. Most interviewees have expressed a sense of isolation at varying times in their lives. This has often taken the form of not being made to feel welcome, being looked at with suspicion, indifferent attitudes to them, hence reinforcing views that perhaps they are being treated as such because they look different. Many of the African Caribbean respondents have experienced negative stereotyping by people, such as being asked if they know where to 'score' drugs or whether they are from London.

'People moving into this area should also make the effort to meet the local community half way and not expect everything to be handed to them on a plate. We should make the effort to learn about the local culture and make an effort to take part in local activities'. Asian Male.

'When I first moved to the area, it was hard for me to be accepted but I made the effort to join clubs and societies and started to be an active part in what was going on in my area'. Malaysian Female

'People look at me sometimes as if to question about why I am here'. Bangladeshi male.

'People automatically assume that I will not appreciate country life, so therefore exclude me'. Japanese male.

'I was never invited to any of the village fetes by my colleagues and acquaintances'. Thai male.

'Our family were seen as a novelty in the village and fondly spoken of, as if we were objects....it was harmless and rather sweet....made us feel special in a rather funny way'. Mixed- race male.

'People are generally very interested in where I come from or originate from, even though I was born and bred in England'. Asian male.

'A fellow pupil asked me if I had been to Russia over the summer, because being Muslim, I must have had something to do with the hostage-taking at the school' Male aged 12

73% of those who filled out questionnaires and 74% of those interviewed report some form of racist behaviour, whether it is violence, harassment, jokes or taunts.

These have taken some of the following forms:

- 'Go back to your own country'
- Being blamed for anything to do with terrorism, because 'I look like a Muslim'
- People making thoughtless comments
- Hearing racist jokes from work colleagues
- 'Hearing racist jokes about other ethnic minorities apart from me'
- Hearing people from the council supporting far-right parties
- Sense of isolation
- Articles in the press and some items in the school curriculum been insensitive to one's race or faith.
- Stereotyping in terms of what ethnic minority people wear.

The majority of the people interviewed felt contented to live in West Dorset and those who have experienced the worst sense of isolation have been those that have just moved into the area. The majority of respondents have moved to West Dorset for work reasons, so the sense of isolation and marginalisation has been limited.

'As long as I have work and money to support my family back home, I don't care who talks to me or not'.  
Asian male.

The participants that have experienced most isolation and marginalisation are:

- Restaurant staff
- People new to the area (0-2years)
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Ethnic minority women

Of those interviewed that were born in Britain have not had the same experiences as the above stated groups. They have found it quite easy to settle in the area due to little or no language problems, having the English culture in common and feeling generally equal in the work environment. In summary:

- Most of the respondents have reported no negative views about living in the area and have been made to feel quite welcome.
- The levels of marginalisation and isolation have varied a great degree amongst the participants.
- There is a general perception that being made to feel like an outsider is not just reserved for visible minorities.
- Muslims, especially Muslim women, have sometimes been targeted and subjected to harassment and taunts.
- Minorities are expected to tolerate 'jokes'.
- Their experiences are often trivialised and are told to see it as part of every day life
- Some of the respondents suffer more from outdated views, stereotypes and patronising than others.
- People, who have had bad experiences in their area, do tend to have less affinity with the area.
- There is sometimes the feeling of 'what's the point in making an effort, when we will be forgotten again in a couple of month's time'.
- Most respondents have said that once locals start to recognise the positive contributions that the ethnic minority people make in the community, social acceptance will start to accelerate.
- Most ethnic minority people have recognised the fact that they also need to make some effort to fit in with the local community, whilst still retaining their cultural identity.
- Most respondents also highlighted the need for community development and integration work between different groups of people in the area.

## Overall findings and Conclusions

- Life on the whole in West Dorset is generally good for ethnic minority people. Opinions on lifestyles vary, but all did agree that in terms of racial and cultural awareness, things could definitely improve.
- The local ethnic minority population of West Dorset is diverse in itself and so developing just one community group to encompass all may not be the best possible solution.
- The more visible minorities have experienced being marginalised and this has been documented by being looked at with suspicion, humiliating treatment and not being able to access help.
- Though most of the respondents are happy to mix as much as possible with the local community, the need to retain their cultural identity was also important.
- Muslims and asylum seekers have experienced more hostility recently.
- Language is still a problem when trying to access services in West Dorset.
- Environmental health seems to be the main service that the ethnic minority restaurants are aware of and have stated that relations are very good.
- The ethnic minority people in the area are still not completely aware of which services are provided by whom and also how best they can make use of such services.
- There is a perception that due to low numbers, ethnic minority issues are of a very low priority and thus ignored to a large extent.

# Recommendations

## Business Support Recommendations

- Visits should be made to restaurants for information about the different types of business clubs that are available. Leaflets could be distributed or dialogue could take place to inform people about the different type of business support that is available.

## Crime and Disorder/ Community Safety Recommendations

- In terms of community safety, ethnic minority people need to know about the powers of the law in terms of tackling racism. People need to feel that when the council says that they do not tolerate hate crimes, the council adopts a collective voice. This kind of collective responsibility gives more credibility to the council's efforts in combating racial prejudice in the eyes of the local ethnic minority population.
- The police are seen to be inconsistent in their interpretation of the law in regard to ethnic minority people. Therefore fairness and a genuine willingness to deal with incidences should be made a top priority.
- Some of the restaurant owners have said that they would like to understand more about how the different law enforcement agencies operate. A community liaison police officer should therefore make contact with local caterers so as to organise information sharing workshops.

## Community Development Recommendations

- The council's Community Facilitator must continue to develop and enhance the capacity of the multi cultural network.
- The Community Facilitator must focus on identifying individual needs rather than generalising and assuming that everyone shares the same interests.

## Leisure and Tourism Recommendations

- Organising multi cultural events in the area could encourage more involvement from ethnic minority people.
- A consultation group for policy development could be set up to involve people from diverse cultures, this would make a positive use of peoples' expertise and life experiences and thus improve the attractiveness of the area.

## Housing and Accommodation Recommendations

- A scheme whereby people new to the area can find it easier to rent private accommodation should be addressed.
- Information regarding planning information, loans, housing rights could be sent out or public information workshops could be arranged.

## Advice Recommendations

- Information can be sent to restaurants letting them know about what types of advice centres are available in West Dorset and where they are.
- Advisory Services to receive diversity training.

## **Awareness about the district council Recommendations**

- Staff training about cultural diversity issues was the overriding recommendation. Respondents want to feel confident that the person engaging with them will have some basic sensitivity about some of their issues.
- Managers from ethnic minority restaurants in the area could be invited on tours of the council offices, so as to break down barriers. This exercise can help to foster a sense of consideration towards ethnic minority people in the area.

## **General Recommendations**

Ethnic minority people should be seen as people with the same aspirations and basic needs as the indigenous people, in terms of identifying needs.

‘ We basically want the same things. A decent job, good education, not be fussed over, treated fairly and to have a fair share of opportunities in life.’

The key findings should be used to improve the different ways of delivering services, by making information simpler to understand, by making information more widely available.

Policy developers must avoid using generalisations and assumptions and take time to see the levels and types of diversity within the area.

Cultural diversity and race awareness training is highly recommended for council staff, in order to develop a better understanding of procedures and legislation surrounding equality of opportunity. This should enable staff to be more proactive in tackling racist behaviour of staff or other service users.

A strategy looking at ethnic minority community development in the area needs to be created which can carry on the momentum of this consultation project.

A translation service or network should be set up.

Educational courses like basic IT and English as a foreign language, should be widely publicised amongst the ethnic minority restaurants.

Ethnic minority people should be encouraged to be part of the council’s citizens’ panel.

Publicising materials in other languages should be encouraged. Care must be taken however to ensure that the languages chosen are relevant to the ethnic minorities within the area.

The consultation with ethnic minority people should be an ongoing programme. People evolve in their development and it is important for the council’s views and policies to develop as well.

## Further Information

West Dorset District Council  
Race Equality Scheme and Revised Action Plan 2003-2006  
[www.westdorset-dc.gov.uk/ethnicminority](http://www.westdorset-dc.gov.uk/ethnicminority)

Sarah Reeves: Strategic Community Development Officer (Equalities)  
West Dorset District Council  
56/60 High West Street  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1UZ  
Tel: 01305 252314  
Email: [s.reeves@westdorset-dc.gov.uk](mailto:s.reeves@westdorset-dc.gov.uk)

Dorset Racial Equality Council  
43 Oxford Road  
Bournemouth  
BH8 8JB  
Te: 01202 553 003  
[dorset.raceequality@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:dorset.raceequality@ukonline.co.uk)

Commission for Racial Equality  
[www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)

Dorset Racist and Homophobic Incident Group  
Helen Fletcher: Community Safety Co-ordinator  
West Dorset District Council  
(Representative of the Western Dorset Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership)  
Tel: 01305 252267  
Email: [h.fletcher@westdorset-dc.gov.co.uk](mailto:h.fletcher@westdorset-dc.gov.co.uk)

Camilla Gibson  
Diversity Officer  
Dorset County Hall  
County Hall  
Colliton Park  
Dorchester  
DT1 1XJ  
Tel: 01305 251000  
[www.dorsetcc.gov.uk](http://www.dorsetcc.gov.uk)

# Appendix 1 Questionnaire

## Personal details

Name.....

Phone  
number.....Email.....

Address.....  
.....

.....  
...

Age..... Male.....Female.....Country of origin.....

Ethnic origin.....Any children.....if so how many.....M.....F.....

## General Information

**1** *How long have you lived in West Dorset.....*

1a Which Town or Village.....

**2** *What do you like about living in West Dorset?*

**3** **What don't you like about living in West Dorset?**

**4** **Name 3 suggestions that West Dorset District Council can do to make your life better in your area?**

**5** **Is it easy for you to know about what services that the District council provide?**

Yes No

**6** **If no, are there enough resources and services in the area to make this happen?**

Yes No

**7** **What can be done to make services and resources easier for you to get to and understand?**

**8 Please say in terms of what is important to you, which services do you feel you would most like support and information about (1 being top and so on)**

- Health  Employment
- Sports and Leisure  Social services
- Housing  Business Support
- Community Safety  Social events/participation
- Education  Advice on Benefits
- Immigration  Legal

**9 Are there any other services that you would like to know about? Yes No**

9a If yes, what are they?

**10 Do you have equal access to West Dorset District Council services?**

**Yes No**

**10a any other comments**

**11 Have you ever been victims of any of the following?**

	Yes	No
Racial Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racial Violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vandalism/Graffiti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racist 'Jokes'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11a other comments

12 Do you know where to report any kind of Racist Incident? Yes No

13 Would you report a racist incident? Yes No

13a If the answer is no, why?

14 What type of issues (e.g. Language problems), if any, do you face when you visit your local Hospital or Doctor?

14a any other comments

15 What types of issues/difficulties do you face when trying to get a Job in West Dorset?

15a any other comments

16 What type of social activities would you like to see in the area?

16a would you like to take part in organising them? Yes No

17 Would you like to meet with me to discuss anything covered today in more detail?

Yes No

Please feel free to use the remaining space for any more comments.

Thank you very much for your time.

## Appendix Two

### Evaluation sheet for Black and ethnic minority consultations

Name:

Nationality:

G  I

<p><b><u>Education</u></b> curriculum; racial harassment; bullying; activities; support systems; homework clubs; Saturday schools; communication; adult education/ESOL; career advice; child care</p>	
<p><b><u>Sports</u></b> participation; type; support; gaps</p>	
<p><b><u>Crime &amp; Disorder</u></b> community safety; police; nuisance, complaints</p>	
<p><b><u>Leisure &amp; Recreation</u></b> types; existing provision; level of involvement, BEM tourism</p>	
<p><b><u>Business support</u></b> business clubs; suppliers; local authority's support; contacts/networking; grants; training/EHO; other support; waste disposal</p>	
<p><b><u>Advice</u></b> existing provision; CAB; legal; immigration; gaps; benefits</p>	
<p><b><u>Housing/accommodation</u></b> benefits; access/needs/choice; loans; finance; rights; planning information</p>	

<b>Community Groups</b> grants/funding; networks; support; start up/training	
<b>Employment</b> access; procedures; benefits/entitlement; support; discrimination; legislation	
<b>Health</b> older people; carers needs; caring situations	

# Appendix Three

## Questionnaire for young people

Please List 3 things that you like about living in West Dorset

- .....
- .....
- .....

Please list 3 things that you don't like about living in West Dorset

- .....
- .....
- .....

Have you ever experienced any of the following?

	Yes	No
Racist Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racist Attacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Anything else you think is unfair because of what you look like or where you come from

Yes  No

If the answers are yes, feel free to write more about them

.....  
.....  
.....

Do you have easy access to sporting and leisure facilities?

Yes  No

Please tell me more depending on your answer.....

.....

Please list 3 things that you like about your school/college

- .....
- .....
- .....

Please do the same for things that you do not like or can be improved?

- .....
- .....
- .....

What issues do you think your school/college can cover more about?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

Is their adequate information about your Cultural Background in School?

Yes  No

What types of information or activities to do with your cultural background would you like to see?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

Where do you hang out in your spare time?

.....

Have you found it easier to make friends in the area?

Yes  No

Please feel free to say more.....

.....

.....

Are there any places that you do not feel safe in, in your area?

.....

Are there any activities that you would like to get involved in but feel that you do not have the opportunity?

Yes  No

If yes, Please tell me more about these activities?

.....

Do you have easy access to information about?

		Yes	No
Health advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Multi cultural events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fashion that relate to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ethnic minority books/magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact with other ethnic minorities like yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
After school support/Homework clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Joining Youth clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other youth activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Youth Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Information about home Country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Part-time Work		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career Advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Please feel free to say more about any of the above

Would you like to get involved in helping to organise multi cultural events in the area?

Yes  No

**Name** .....

**Age** .....

**Address**.....

**Male...female...**

.....

**Phone** .....

.....

**Email** .....

**Name of School**.....

**Ethnic origin**.....

**How long have you lived in the area**.....

**Which Town or Village**.....

Thanks for having a say about your life and where you live.