

Deconstructing Barriers

Full report and recommendations

A research report into discrimination in age, race and disability in the North West construction sector



ConstructionSkills

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North West construction sector**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In 2006, ConstructionSkills in the North West were successful in gaining European Social Fund (ESF Objective 3) funding to contribute and support a research project that focused on identifying the nature and effect of institutional discrimination in the construction sector with specific reference to race, disability and age. The project has enabled ConstructionSkills to respond to the North West Regional Development Plan by researching the barriers to employment within the construction industry for people with a disability, ethnic minorities and those affected by age discrimination. The project aimed to examine barriers that produce a low entry rate to construction apprenticeships and employment by candidates from the identified under represented groups. The research data produced as a result of the project was to enable the follow-up of recommendations for key stakeholders within the industry, as well as helping people enter and remain within the industry as an identified regional group (within ESF Objective 3 prospectus), in addition to raising awareness about discrimination to enable it to be addressed and tackled at all levels within the workplace.

Following a procurement process to identify a suitable research consultancy to undertake the methodology of the project, York Consulting Limited (YCL) was commissioned by ConstructionSkills to undertake this activity.

Research activity undertaken by YCL commenced in June 2006.

This report aims to explore the nature and context of institutional discrimination, and through its findings address any areas where discrimination, or potential discrimination, may exist. The diversity and equality agenda and its subsequent anti-discrimination legislation within training and the workplace is well documented and evident. However, often when a sector is dominated by people from a particular gender, ethnicity or ability, non-traditional applicants can face a variety of barriers and challenges in order to enter or apply. This can be viewed to be a problem in occupational sectors where skill or labour shortages exist. The image of the construction industry is often stereotyped and any barriers that exist are likely to be reinforced by people in a variety of positions, including employers, training and careers professionals and in some cases family and friends. In addition, workplace culture, practices and procedures can also strengthen

those barriers, whether conscious or unconscious. In the context of this report, institutional discrimination is regarded as the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, age or disability (such discrimination can affect other groups, for example in terms of gender, but these are not within the scope of this report). Institutional discrimination can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and stereotyping which disadvantage certain groups of people.

The project's methodology aimed to provide a rounded view of institutional discrimination in the sector, drawing on the views and experiences of employers, employees, trainees and other stakeholders. The main elements of the project's fieldwork were as follows:

- Consultations with 45 employers, diversity bodies and other construction stakeholders;
- A telephone survey of 300 employers across the North West;
- Five focus groups with construction trainees, employees and employers in the region;
- A stakeholder workshop; and
- A review of equality legislation and its implications for employment.

Findings

Disabled people, older people and those from BME communities are already disadvantaged when it comes to employment, and this is exacerbated in construction. Disabled and older people are less likely to be employed in the North West construction sector than in the regional workforce as a whole. The proportion of people from BME communities employed in the sector is about the same as that for the entire regional workforce.

Employers do not perceive any short-term problems with recruitment that might lead them to consider recruiting from a more diverse pool of recruits. Furthermore, recruitment in the construction sector is heavily dependent on word of mouth, which can

contribute to reinforcing the current workforce stereotypes.

Substantial differences can be seen between large and small firms. Small firms are less likely to adopt flexible working practices, have equal opportunities policies, engage in diversity training or feel affected by anti-discrimination legislation. This poses a considerable challenge to a sector that is dominated by small and micro-businesses.

The experience of larger firms suggests that that the cumulative impact of legislation, diversity and equality awareness, and greater working with the public sector, can have a positive impact on the employment of a more diverse workforce.

Employees and trainees highlighted a number of key issues:

- A lack of awareness about the sector's career opportunities in certain communities and more generally at school level;
- Employer reluctance to 'take a risk' by employing or providing a placement to someone who does not fit the traditional construction worker stereotype;
- The need for people from minority groups to build up a high level of tolerance and mental toughness to cope with feelings of isolation;
- A lack of awareness about the legal rights to be protected from discrimination, and a reluctance to exercise these rights in practice.

The difference between employer and employee views was noticeable. Employers tended to regard the solution to discrimination as lying with individuals from minority communities themselves, while employees stressed the role of employers in improving diversity. The attitudes, behaviour and culture of a firm are integral to the way in which it responds to issues like diversity. The focus for action therefore needs to be on changing business and employer attitudes towards 'non-traditional' construction workers, rather than expecting these individuals simply to 'fit in' with the existing culture, especially if that culture is hostile or unwelcoming.

Conclusions

The findings of the Deconstructing Barriers research project can provide some important messages for policy-makers, employers and stakeholders about the reality of diversity in

construction and the exploration of institutional discrimination. The fact that this research was conducted in the North West should not exclude its findings being drawn on nationally, or by other regions. In addition, it is acknowledged that the journey to a fully diverse and inclusive workforce is long-term and requires commitment, drive and full partnership working and collaboration for it to be meaningful and deliver measurable results. A number of partnerships within the NW sector currently exist, but more work and commitment is needed for a fully joined up response to the legal, moral and business framework that currently exists.

It is clear that there are a number of issues and barriers that, on first examination, have been described as 'traditional ways of working' and have remained unchallenged. However, the UK construction industry employs more than two million people nationwide and has been growing steadily for the last 12 years. Forecasts have indicated that the industry will need to recruit and train some 88,000 entrants a year for the next five years in order to meet the growing demand. Add to this the sometimes negative perceptions that people have of construction as a career choice, and a significant challenge exists for the sector. Moreover, it is certain that current recruitment activities and practices in employment and training will not be able to meet the skill needs of the industry. The extent to which young, white, non-disabled men will represent the bulk of the working age population is receding.

1. Through previous research and skills data, the industry has indicated that it needs, and wants, a workforce that better reflects the communities it works in, and that it wants individuals to regard a career in construction as desirable and open to them. Construction companies have said that they want, and recognise the need to encourage, a more diverse workforce and for funding and training to be available to recruits who have previously made a choice not to enter into the industry, or who have been discriminated against by the industry.
2. This report has identified a number of institutional barriers that need to be overcome if the skills needs of the sector, its apparent willingness to change, and the needs of specific groups in society are to combine in order to create a more diverse workforce.
3. The barriers that face individuals in terms of age, disability and race certainly have their differences, and each has its own set of crosscutting themes (such as socio-economic status, gender, religion, faith, culture and heritage). This means that

there is a considerable amount of experience to draw on about reality of employment and training in the sector, and identifying what needs to be addressed. Also It is also clear however that many of these barriers have common roots in institutional discrimination, unwitting prejudice and stereotyping that are reinforced by processes and behaviours.

Recommendations

Encouraging interest

The business case for broadening the appeal of the construction sector and encouraging more applications across the board is clear, but it needs to be better understood by firms. ConstructionSkills has undertaken a variety of employer driven diversity activity, for example the recent Opening Doors to Diversity in Construction handbook, produced and supported by the NWDA, ConstructionSkills and the construction SSPA.

Recommendation One: There is a need for greater promotion of the business benefits of diversity within the construction sector. These include broadening the skills base, promoting a positive public image of the sector, and meeting the needs and requirements of an increasingly diverse customer base.

Increasing diversity is a potentially important way of exploiting the demographic changes within the regional population. The Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for Construction provides the industry with a unique opportunity to address its skill needs. Industry, Government and the Education Sector are all partners in a single, over arching strategy to ensure that the right people, with the right skills, are in place at the right time to meet future and current construction demand. The Construction Skills Network, which consists of 12 regional Construction Skills Observatory Groups and a national Observatory Group, was formed to deliver authoritative data and workforce predictions to aid skills planning. In the North West, the Construction Skills Observatory draws on the knowledge and expertise from Government, training providers, construction employers, regional organisations and customers so that future skill needs and investment can be planned. Diversity is a key priority within the SSA and the demographics of the region and potential pool of skills and labour through non-traditional applicants could be further developed and exploited to the benefit of the industry.

Recommendation Two: The Construction Skills Network, North West Construction Skills Observatory and SSPA members should help firms to understand more clearly the demographic shifts that will impact on labour supply in the future, and the case for encouraging the development of a more diverse workforce.

There is widespread recognition that influencing the next generation of construction workers is vital. Schools are unlikely to promote the benefits of working in the sector sufficiently by themselves. Some awareness raising already takes place in schools, but this has historically focused upon young women and ethnic minorities. For a fully inclusive and diverse workforce, more activity and strategic planning needs to include disability and age issues.

Recommendation Three: Continued partnership working with Connexions and other organisations within the Information and Advice Group (IAG) network to promote careers in construction to BME communities and young people with a disability needs to take place. Awareness raising activity should not be restricted to under represented groups based upon gender and ethnic background in isolation. More work could be done to engage with younger people in disabled communities to ensure that they can make an informed choice in their own career destinies, with the right support and career guidance.

The research for this report indicates that there are a number of common perceptions and misconceptions of the construction sector that could be addressed through its marketing and promotional support material, including the use of positive images of disability in construction.

Recommendation Four: Literature to promote the construction sector should ensure that the sector's image is better-presented as a career option for disabled people, BME communities, and a range of age groups. This could be done by presenting positive images of each of the under represented groups in a variety of occupations to persuade the reader that work within the sector for non-traditional entrants is possible and achievable.

More generally, there is a case for a greater number of targeted activities to engage specific communities and groups. The Sustainable Training for Sustainable Communities programme by the Housing Forum and Constructing Excellence (CE) and partnered by ConstructionSkills has identified good practice since its inception in 2003. Client-led projects within the programme have demonstrated that it is crucial to have partnering

with local specialist agencies to recruit under represented groups into the industry. Their experience and expertise gave support and direction to both clients and potential entrants from under represented groups into the industry.

Recommendation Five: Client-led projects should encourage the sector to promote itself more widely within specific communities and groups through recruitment drives and engagement activities sub-regionally.

Accessing training

Funding can be a major barrier to accessing training for disadvantaged groups. Older trainees lose out substantially because of the focus on the 16-19 agenda, while reduced financial support for language classes and evening courses impacts on disabled people and ethnic minorities, among others. Many funding decisions lay beyond the remit of regional partners and individual learning delivery bodies. However, there is capacity for the sector to lobby decision-makers in order to encourage wider participation in construction training.

Recommendation Six: ConstructionSkills should seek to influence the financing of construction training in order to ensure that older people, people with a disability, and people from BME communities are able to access training opportunities within the sector

Colleges in the region that run construction courses acknowledge that there is more that they could be doing to promote a more diverse intake, but the impetus is limited by the current high levels of applications for courses. However, there are some specific examples of Colleges working in partnership with ConstructionSkills providing access to training courses in specific occupations for under represented groups through a variety of positive action measures e.g. Bolton College and MANCAT, Manchester.

Recommendation Seven: Construction education and training bodies should be encouraged to share best practice about improving the diversity of their intake, and work in partnership with others to enable a more diverse applicant base.

Information on the career destinations of trainees appears to be limited. It is important to understand the extent to which individuals from key groups leave the industry, and why. High leaving rates may be linked to the problems some groups appear to have with securing apprenticeship placements as part of their training.

Recommendation Eight: ConstructionSkills, the LSC and education and training providers could consider how to improve the monitoring of retention rates within the sector, the career destinations of trainees, and success in securing work placements. This information needs to be available in terms of age, ethnicity and disability.

Recruiting differently

Current recruitment methods such as informal chats, traditional networking opportunities through the usual channels of family, friends and acquaintances and unstructured advertising can contribute to, and support the appointment of, 'likes'. They offer few opportunities to non-traditional applicants who may wish to enter the industry.

Recommendation Nine: Employers and stakeholders can help to tackle recruitment barriers by widening the net beyond traditional sources of labour supply. Greater effort and action to reach the communities identified in this report to engage them through a variety of methods could be undertaken.

Recommendation Ten: The construction sector needs to become better at monitoring the age, ethnic and disability status of its employees. A baseline of these factors would allow the sector to monitor its progress towards delivering a more diverse workforce. Sector organisations could obtain this information through employer engagement activity that may already take place. (For example, CITB-ConstructionSkills Levy/Grant administration activity)

Recommendation Eleven: Employers need to examine their selection criteria and recruitment processes to identify current procedures or practices which may hinder the progress of potential entrants on the basis of their age, ethnicity or disability.

Employing confidently

Responses to diversity training in the workforce vary, but on balance they appear to be received positively. The capacity for smaller companies to undertake this training by themselves is very limited, and they will need additional support. The targeting of such training is also important. It is front-line managers and site foremen who most need such training. They are in the best position to monitor and moderate behaviour in the workplace, and are often instrumental in on-the-spot recruitment decisions.

Recommendation Twelve: Support agencies, in conjunction with federations, unions and the SSPA could work together to produce comprehensive education and training resources in age, race and disability. This would assist employers in understanding the meaning of discrimination, diversity and legal frameworks, and encourage action towards change in these areas.

Certain recurrent issues were identified throughout the research, including an apparent widespread fear among employers of all things deemed 'politically correct'. Some employers appeared reluctant to recruit outside of their traditional base, whether through fear of resentment among current workers; avoiding perceived legal or cost implications; or thinking that in doing so they are 'protecting' people from harassment and bullying. This is evidenced, for example, by employers who tended to be reactive in disability issues. Firms need to be more proactive in dealing with disability, and provide a working environment that encourages disclosure and accommodation of disabilities. There is evidence of some work in this area, for example Constructing Excellence Respect for People Toolkit, which includes a module on equality and diversity. This module helps companies identify issues that need to be addressed in equality and diversity in the workplace, and provides links to agencies and information that can help in responding to the challenge of managing equality and diversity in construction and the built environment.

There is also evidence of sub-regional projects that provide resources for teachers, learning providers and employers in construction that challenge outdated concepts of gender and ethnicity stereotyping in construction occupations. However, more activity needs to be focused upon disability and age, the barriers experienced by these groups and how the industry and employers could respond to them. Furthermore, equality specific resources need to be readily accessible for employers, particularly small to medium-sized enterprises, and be widely disseminated to ensure awareness.

Recommendation Thirteen: Employers need to become more proactive and confident when it comes to addressing diversity. Support agencies need to find a way in which to provide information to the employers and engage them on diversity issues in an atmosphere that encourages their cooperation and ties in with construction procurement agendas as a way forward.

Employers need to be able to source up-to-date and non-technical information regarding

diversity in the workplace. There is also a specific lack of awareness about the new age discrimination legislation. Whilst evidence suggests that awareness of the new public sector duty on disability discrimination is also likely to be low.

Recommendation Fourteen: There is an urgent need for Government agencies and employer representative bodies to raise awareness among construction firms about the new age discrimination legislation and the public sector duty on disability, especially among smaller companies. Companies need to be engaged through a partnership approach.

Ensuring retention

Employers have an important role to play in tackling discrimination and ensuring that employees and their peers from under represented groups have an opportunity to realise their full potential, once they are in the workplace. This responsibility is wider than management teams.

Recommendation Fifteen: All employees in construction companies need to be made aware of equality and diversity issues and responsibilities at induction stage. This induction could tie in and support new or existing policies and procedures in Equal Opportunities and diversity within the workplace.

The research findings suggest that some employees from under represented groups gained benefit from support networks within the workplace and on site. Support practices, such as coaching and mentoring also appear to help in the crucial early days of employment. There is also evidence that some construction companies in the North West already adopt support programmes that support minority workers. For example, Bramall Construction have found success in ensuring the retention of women in the early stages of employment through pairing, buddying and mentoring practices on site. This approach could also work in terms of older workers and workers who may have a disability.

Recommendation Sixteen: Employers should consider how to adopt and encourage the use of mentoring programmes, buddying systems and pairing work placements to help minority applicants in the first stages of recruitment and within new roles.

Satisfying customers

Some public sector clients have demonstrated the ability to exert real influence on recruitment in construction. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to large scale contracts are encouraging recruitment from under represented groups in local areas, although there is little evidence that this good practice is filtering through to private sector contracts. However, KPIs and other targets need to be used carefully if they are to encourage good practice.

Recommendation Seventeen: The diversity agenda needs to be an integral part of all public sector-led construction projects and initiatives. There is greater scope for such exercises to be adopted by the region's public sector clients. The experience of some sector bodies suggests that parts of the public sector require education on how to incorporate contractual clauses in equality and diversity with success.

Readiness and enthusiasm for change

The regional construction sector now needs to address the barriers and issues identified in this report. Partners have already demonstrated their readiness and enthusiasm to action and change through the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), the Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy and within the Regional Statement of Skills Priorities. However, there is scope for more practical action to be delivered by these commitments.

As the promotion of equality and diversity is regarded as a crosscutting theme in strategies, this should enable an integrated approach to addressing the barriers identified.

Recommendation Eighteen: Equality and diversity strategies need practical action at sub-regional level, for the industry to make the changes necessary. Clients and contractors all have a role to play to ensure that discrimination, obvious and hidden, is tackled with commitment and energy. This should take place as part of an integrated strategy within the sector, and driven by the main players into the supply chain. Promotion of activities generated by regional strategies should be widely disseminated to ensure that good practice can be adopted at a local level by clients, employers and support agencies.

The recommendations within the report identify a number of ways in which the sector

can identify and drive changes forward, both within the Sector Skills Agreement and within each of the organisations own strategies for addressing and developing equality and diversity.

In developing these recommendations, we have engaged the members of the Construction Sector Skills and Productivity Alliance (SSPA). The SSPA was established in 2003 and is designed to ensure that the varying priorities of the construction sector's regional partners are aligned. The North West Sector Skills and Productivity Alliance (SSPA) for Construction is driven by the North West Development Agency (NWDA), and brings together a wide range of strategic partners that include ConstructionSkills, SummitSkills, Asset Skills, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Centre for Construction Innovation (CCI), North West Regional Intelligence Unit, Jobcentre Plus, Business Link and the North West Universities Association.

Drawing on this broad base of local knowledge and expertise, the SSPA has provided the focal point for the development of the regional Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for Construction.

The Construction SSA in the NW addresses the key skills challenges revealed through in-depth research and industry consultation. The SSA is designed to deliver the right type of training, in the right format for employers and their employees to improve the industry's performance and productivity.

This is achieved in collaboration with construction employers, training providers and Government partners. At the heart of the SSA is an increased employer commitment to training and skills, and priority measures in diversity and equality feature within the plan for the region. The SSPA members have each been engaged regarding the findings of this report and discussion regarding the way forward has taken place.

The engagement of the SSPA was important for three reasons:

- Firstly, to ensure that the direction of the report's recommendations aligned to the SSPA's future priorities;
- Secondly, to explore further the recommendations and flesh out some ideas for action (such as the involvement of CCI and Business Link, in helping small firms cope better with equality and diversity issues); and

- Thirdly, to build commitment and enthusiasm for the research's findings that can be carried forward with sector employers in the future.

This final reason for SSPA engagement – building a commitment for future action – is perhaps the most important. Employers have a vital role to play in addressing the barriers identified in this report, as well as industry federations, unions and public sector bodies. However, the engagement of the SSPA provides a regional strategic forum to oversee the delivery of change.

Recommendation Nineteen: All members within the SSPA should ensure that all issues regarding ethnicity, disability and age are included into their relevant diversity strategies and promoted actively through their activities.

Finally, ConstructionSkills and other partners, particularly those within the built environment, should look to identify projects and activities that might be suitable for a wider audience beyond construction. This could leverage greater resources and engage other stakeholders at regional or national level, while still satisfying the needs of the North West construction sector.

1 INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2006, ConstructionSkills in the North West were successful in gaining European Social Fund (ESF Objective 3) funding to undertake a research project which focused on identifying the nature and effect of institutional discrimination in the construction sector with specific reference to race, disability and age. The project has enabled ConstructionSkills to respond to the North West Regional Development Plan by researching the barriers to employment within the construction industry for people with a disability, ethnic minorities and those affected by age discrimination. The project aimed to examine barriers which produce a low entry rate to construction apprenticeships and employment by candidates from the identified under represented groups. The research data produced as a result of the project was to enable the follow-up of recommendations for key stakeholders within the industry, as well as helping people enter and remain within the industry as an identified regional group (within ESF Objective 3 prospectus), in addition to raising awareness about discrimination to enable it to be addressed and tackled at all levels within the workplace.

Following a procurement process to identify a research consultancy to undertake the methodology of the project, York Consulting Limited (YCL) was commissioned by ConstructionSkills to undertake this activity.

- 1.1 Research activity undertaken by YCL commenced in June 2006.
- 1.2 The research focused on three areas of discrimination: age, race and ethnicity, and disability. These are described in more detail in Section Two. The absence of gender discrimination in this research is due to the requirements of the ESF funding available. It is recognised by both the project team and ConstructionSkills to be an equally valid discrimination issue for the sector to address.

Project aims

- 1.3 The project's aims were twofold:
- The completion of a research project into institutional discrimination in the construction sector in England's North West Region, with particular regard to improving the recruitment and retention of people who may currently be affected by age, disability or ethnic discrimination; and
 - The delivery of a series of recommendations for tackling institutional discrimination in these areas.
- 1.4 A Steering Group, comprising stakeholders from regional construction bodies, the private sector, and equalities organisations, oversaw the direction of this research. This Group were responsible for monitoring and evaluating progress, testing consistency of issues across all the findings and maintaining an overview of the projects direction against its objectives.
- 1.5 A full list of the Steering Group's members can be found at Annex A.

Methodology

- 1.6 The methodology for this project is divided into three main phases.

Phase 1 – Scoping and secondary research

- 1.7 This phase comprised three elements of initial research:
- Twelve depth interviews with regional stakeholders designed to tap into existing knowledge; establish people's expectations of the project; and identify other people or information that might be helpful to the research;
 - A review of equality legislation, including employment legislation covering race and ethnicity, disability and age discrimination, in order to understand how laws translate into employment practice; and
 - An analysis of data to provide some quantitative contextual background on the sector (e.g. employment statistics, demographic data and trends).

- 1.8 The phase ended with the production of a Key Issues Paper, which highlighted the main issues to be focused on, and set out the research tools required for the next phase.

Phase 2 – Primary research

- 1.9 Phase 2 saw the delivery of the primary research for this project. This comprised a further three elements:
- A telephone survey of 300 employers in the region (delivered by McCallum-Layton on behalf of YCL) to provide a qualitative picture of recruitment and employment issues in the fields of discrimination and diversity;
 - Five focus groups with construction trainees, employees and employers in the region to establish a richer, qualitative view of the realities of discrimination and diversity in the workplace; and
 - A further round of 33 qualitative consultations with stakeholders and employers.
- 1.10 This phase ended with the production of an Interim Report, which to draw together the results of the primary research and set out some emerging conclusions and recommendations for consideration in the next phase.

Phase 3 – Feedback and action-planning

- 1.11 In Phase 3, the emerging findings of the primary research were considered more fully, both by the project team and sector stakeholders, in order to identify specific actions for the future that would help to address institutional discrimination. This involved three tasks:
- A stakeholder workshop, which considered the emerging findings of the primary research and began the process of identifying actions to overcome barriers related to institutional discrimination;
 - A series of action planning consultations with members of the region's Construction Sector Skills and Productivity Alliance (SSPA), who were identified as key partners for the delivery of any ongoing activity; and
-

- A dissemination event held in the region aimed at raising awareness of the research and study findings.

1.12 A full list of organisations that were consulted can be found at Annex B.

Report structure

1.13 The report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two** sets out the relevant terminology for the research and the current legislative framework designed to tackle discrimination.
- **Section Three** gives some contextual background on the North West and the construction sector.
- **Section Four** provides the views of employers, drawing on the survey as well as interview and focus group material.
- **Section Five** sets out the opinions of current trainees and workers in the industry who have participated in the focus groups.
- **Section Six** provides comments from other construction stakeholders, including customers (housing associations and other public bodies) and training and education providers.
- **Section Seven** gives a wider perspective, through the views of diversity and equalities stakeholders.
- **Section Eight** pulls together the conclusions of the research as well as its recommendations.

Acknowledgements

1.14 We would particularly like to thank ConstructionSkills in the North West and members of the Steering Group for their cooperation and support throughout, as well as the many employers, trainees and stakeholders who gave up their valuable time to assist with the research.

1.15 The findings and views expressed in this report are those of YCL's project team, and not necessarily those of ConstructionSkills.

2 TERMINOLOGY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

- 2.1 In this section, some of the specific terminology is described, in particular what is meant by the various forms of discrimination being considered in this research. This is supplemented by summaries of key anti-discrimination legislation, which are often the primary source for such definitions. It should be noted that these are non-technical summaries provided for contextual background, and should not be taken to represent formal legal advice.

Institutional discrimination

Institutional racism

- 2.2 The notion of institutional discrimination has been around at least since the 1970s¹. It originated in the US, and was first used in the context of racial discrimination, when the term 'institutional racism' was adopted. The term helped to differentiate between individual acts of discrimination, which tended to be relatively obvious and deliberate, and a form of discrimination that was in-built into the processes, procedures and cultures of an institution. The latter form of discrimination was viewed as being less obvious, and not necessarily deliberate, making its identification and correction particularly difficult.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

- 2.3 It was the inquiry into the death of the teenager, Stephen Lawrence, in 1999 which brought the term 'institutional racism' to the British public's attention. The Inquiry took a number of submissions from race and equality experts on the subject. The Commission for Racial Equality, for example, defined institutional racism as:

"those established laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in society. If racist consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs or practices, the institution is racist whether or not the individuals

¹ See, for example, Institutional Discrimination by Jo Freeman:
<http://www.jofreeman.com/womensociety/institidiscrim.htm>

*maintaining those practices have racial intentions*²

- 2.4 Such definitions began to highlight the difficulties of addressing institutional discrimination. As a result of its deliberations, the Inquiry developed its own definition of institutional racism, which is now widely regarded as authoritative:

*“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”*³

Institutional discrimination

- 2.5 As diversity and equality issues have developed since 1999, so the Inquiry’s definition has been broadened by other agencies to encompass issues beyond racism. Many bodies, particularly those in the public sector, have developed the wording further, but the underlying tenets remain the same. The following definition developed by the Greater London Assembly is a good example:

“the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, faith or other characteristic. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”

- 2.6 It is this definition that will form the basis for this project, with the focus of research being on age, race and disability discrimination. For the purposes of the project, the ‘appropriate and professional service’ is deemed to mean the training, recruitment and employment practices of the North West construction sector.

² The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, 1999: <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.htm>

³ Ibid.

Age discrimination

Legislation

- 2.7 In October 2006, new legislation came into force making age discrimination against anyone (old or young) unlawful⁴. Of relevance to this report, the new regulations cover:
- A ban on age discrimination in terms of recruitment, promotion and training;
 - The removal of the current age limit for unfair dismissal and redundancy rights;
 - A new right for employees to request working beyond retirement age and a duty on employers to consider that request; and
 - A new requirement for employers to give at least six months notice to employees about their intended retirement date so that individuals can plan better for retirement, and be confident that 'retirement' is not being used as cover for unfair dismissal.

Definition

- 2.8 For the purposes of this project, the term 'older workers' relates to those people in work who are aged 50 and over.

Racial discrimination

Legislation

- 2.9 The legislative framework for tackling discrimination on racial grounds centres on the Race Relations Act 1976 and its subsequent amendments⁵. The act provides protection from racial discrimination; that is treating someone less favourably on the grounds of their race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin. The legislation prohibits discrimination across a range of activities and services, including employment, education, and the provision of goods and services. It focuses on tackling discrimination with regard to people's actions, rather than their

⁴ Full regulations available here: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/draft/ukdsi_0110742664_en.pdf

individual beliefs – discrimination and prejudice are not the same.

- 2.10 In 2001, the Race Relations Act was amended and placed a statutory duty on public bodies, e.g. local authorities, police forces, health authorities, to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations when carrying out their various functions. This change in the legislation represents a more positive, active stance. As recipients of public funds and as providers of public services they are now expected to not only avoid discrimination (old Act) but must also promote equality of opportunity and provide appropriate and relevant services to all people.

Definition

- 2.11 In this research, the definition of ethnic minority groups has been based on that used by the Office for National Statistics for its census classification in England and Wales, namely:

- White (including White British, White Irish and White ‘Other’);
- Mixed;
- Asian (Indian or Pakistani/Bangladeshi) or Asian British;
- Black or Black British; and
- Other ethnic group (including Chinese).

- 2.12 There remains considerable debate around how to define and categorise people from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) is a term frequently used to describe visible ethnic minority communities in the UK and this will be used in this project when referring to the different racial and ethnic groups in the North West.

⁵ Details from the Commission for Racial Equality: <http://www.cre.gov.uk/legal/rra.html>

Disability discrimination

Legislation

- 2.13 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995⁶ prohibits discrimination against disabled people in relation to employment, the provision of goods and services, education and transport. Importantly, the DDA introduced the concept of 'reasonable adjustment', that is the taking of reasonable steps by an employer, for example, to ensure that a disabled person is not substantially disadvantaged by such issues as a physical feature at their workplace. The DDA also provides provision for enforcement in cases where discrimination may exist.
- 2.14 Extensions to the DDA (for example, to include small businesses within the provisions of the Act, and to update the definition of disability) were followed in 2005 by the introduction of the Disability Equality Duty (DED), an important new duty aimed at promoting disability equality across the public sector. The DED, also referred to as the general duty, sets out what public authorities must have due regard to in order to promote equality of opportunity.
- 2.15 Most public authorities are also covered by the specific duties, which set out a framework to assist authorities in meeting their general duty. All public authorities covered by the specific duties must:
- Publish a Disability Equality Scheme (including within it an Action Plan);
 - Involve disabled people in producing the Scheme and Action Plan;
 - Demonstrate they have taken actions in the Scheme and achieved appropriate outcomes;
 - Report on progress; and
 - Review and revise the Scheme.
- 2.16 The equality duty placed on public bodies came into force in December 2006.

⁶ Disability Rights Commission overview of the DDA: http://www.drc-gb.org/the_law/legislation_codes_regulation/keypoints.aspx

2.17 The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) points out three areas where the DDA differs from other anti-discrimination legislation, for example in the field of race and ethnicity:

- It is not unlawful to provide more favourable treatment to a disabled person than is provided to a non-disabled person;
- Whilst a general concept of ‘indirect discrimination’ is not a feature of the DDA as such, the Act does uniquely provide a duty on an employer, for example, to make reasonable adjustments where a provision or practice places a disabled person at a significant disadvantage;
- Unlike other anti-discrimination legislation, less favourable treatment of a disabled person can, in some circumstances, be justified.

Definition

2.18 Definitions of disability are far more complicated than for age and race. For the purposes of this project, the definition provided by the DDA will be used. The Act defines a disabled person as someone with “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. This means that:

- The person must have an impairment that is either physical or mental;
- The impairment must have adverse effects which are substantial;
- The substantial adverse effects must be long-term; and
- The long-term substantial adverse effects must be effects on normal day-to-day activities.⁷

2.19 The definition covers a range of impairments, such as sensory (including hearing or sight conditions); mental health problems (including depression and schizophrenia); learning difficulties, mobility problems, HIV and cancer. This list is not exhaustive, but it does highlight the very large spectrum of conditions and impairments that might be covered by the terms of the DDA.

⁷ For full guidance on the DDA definition, see: <http://www.drc-gb.org/pdf/DefnOfDisability.pdf>

Conclusions

- 2.20 The consideration of the anti-discrimination legislative framework has been important in highlighting a number of issues that have been relevant to the conduct of this research. In particular:
- Institutional discrimination centres on the notion of 'collective failure', rather than individual acts of 'direct' discrimination. As a consequence, this project has not sought out, or provided solutions to, instances of direct discriminatory behaviour (although some were identified in the fieldwork);
 - The causes of institutional discrimination are hard to identify through quantitative methods, which means that the research focus has also considered the processes, attitudes and behaviours within employment, training, recruitment and retention.
- 2.21 Institutional discrimination, by its very nature, is very difficult to identify and therefore address. Some anti-discrimination legislation does seek to deal with indirect forms of discrimination. However, the subtle and sometimes unconscious nature of institutional discrimination means that the law is always likely to be limited in the extent to which it is able to address these shortcomings, and it will never alone be an adequate response to the problem.
- 2.22 The extent to which public equality duties (for race and disability) could affect change is considerable. With more than 40,000 public bodies accountable under the duties, there is the potential for significant downstream influencing of recruitment and employment practices in the private sector through tendering and supply chains.

3 CONSTRUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE NORTH WEST

Introduction

- 3.1 In this section, some context is provided about the construction sector in the North West, as well as population and employment figures for the three groups of specific interest to this research.
- 3.2 Due to data limitations, the information here covers the whole of the North West, including the Objective One areas of Merseyside⁸.

The North West construction sector

- 3.3 The value of construction to the North West regional economy in 2004 was some £6.4bn, representing 8.9% of the region's Gross Value Added⁹. It is a sector that in 2006 employed nearly a quarter of a million people in the North West, or 8% of all those employed in the region.
- 3.4 According to the Construction Skills Network¹⁰, the North West construction sector:
- Has provided robust growth over the past three years;
 - Is more reliant on infrastructure, private commercial and public non-residential contracts than the UK as a whole, these three providing 27% of the sector's activity; the largest element of the sector is repair and maintenance (42% of the total);
 - Is dominated by small firms: in 2005, more than 85% of firms employed fewer than 10 employees each¹¹.

Future trends

- 3.5 Forecasting by the Construction Skills Network up to 2011 suggests that the sector in the North West will continue to grow year-on-year at a rate of 1.4% a year, just

⁸ The Objective One areas of Merseyside are not within the scope of this project.

⁹ Office for National Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry 2006

¹⁰ North West Labour Market Intelligence, 2007

¹¹ Small Business Service, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Statistics UK 2005

over half the UK rate of 2.6%. This is expected to lead to a rise in total employment in the sector by some 6%, or an average annual requirement of 6,960. The number of people working in the construction industry in the North West is anticipated to rise to around 269,500 by 2011.

- 3.6 Data in the remainder of this section comes from the 2006 Annual Population Survey (Office of National Statistics) unless stated otherwise.

Diversity in the North West

- 3.7 The North West Regional Assembly's 2004 scoping report, 'Equality and Diversity in the North West of England'¹², highlights the considerable variety in the region's mix of communities, and the notable differences between its sub-regions. For example:

- The regional BME population of around 6% varies from nearly 10% in East Lancashire to less than 1% in Cumbria. BME communities also tend to live in the region's most deprived areas;
- Disabled people make up over one fifth of the North West's working population, but are less likely to be in employment and more likely to earn lower wages;
- Nearly 15% of the regional population is aged between 14 and 25, and this proportion is substantially greater among some BME communities.

- 3.8 There is substantial regional support for tackling inequalities in the North West. This is particularly evident in the Northwest Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy 2006-09¹³, which focuses on increasing economic activity among certain groups; reducing hate crime; and promoting diversity as a regional asset. The responsibility for delivery of these objectives lies with the NWDA, the Regional Assembly, and Government Office. There are a range of other specific initiatives ongoing, such as 5050 Vision¹⁴, the North West forum on ageing, which seeks to

¹² <http://www.nwra.gov.uk/downloads/documents/imported/851083107415.doc>

¹³ http://www.nwra.gov.uk/downloads/documents/sep_06/nwra_1158850882_Implementation_Plan.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.5050vision.com/>

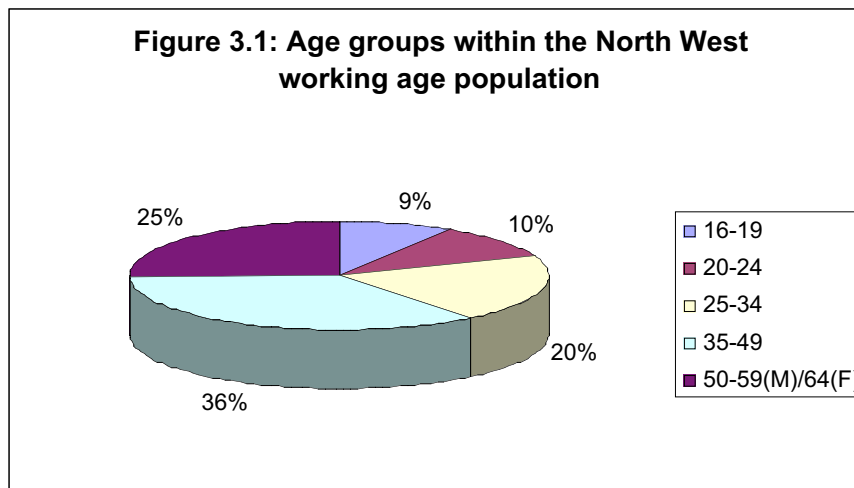
address issues of economic and social exclusion for older people against the backdrop of an ageing regional population.

3.9 The next sub-sections deal with the specific diversity categories in more detail.

Age

Working age population

3.10 The over-50s represent 42% of the adult population in the North West as well as England. In the North West, the over-50s number some 2.25m, of which over 1m (25% of the working age population – Figure 3.1) are below the current age of State Pension entitlement (65 for men, 60 for women). Of those between 50 and the State Pension age, 68% consider themselves to be economically active (73% across England). This group represents more than one fifth (22%) of the economically active working age population in the North West, as it does in England. While the vast majority (92%) of those old enough to qualify for State Pension do not consider themselves economically active, 103,000 (8%) are still in work beyond State Pension age.



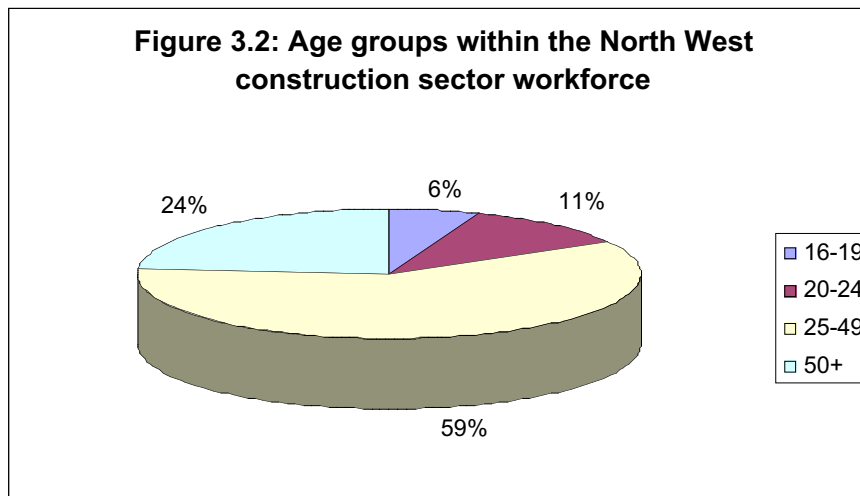
3.11 Government projections¹⁵ suggest that the overall numbers of people over 50 will increase from the current level of 34% of the population to 40% in the next 20

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics: Population Trends

years. Within the 50-64 age band alone, this reflects an increase of 2m people over the same period.

Construction

3.12 The over-50s represent 24% of all those employed in construction in the North West (Figure 3.2), compared to 27% for England. This is a similar number to other industries (the proportion varies between 23% and 29%, depending on industry sector) and compares quite favourably with the proportion of all those employed who are over 50 (25%). The construction sector provides 7% of all employment for the over-50s in the North West, compared to 8% of employment for all age groups.

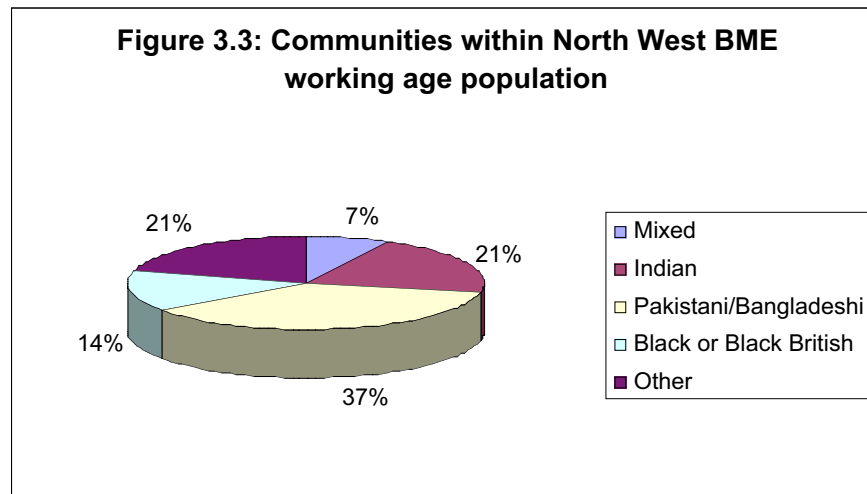


Race and ethnicity

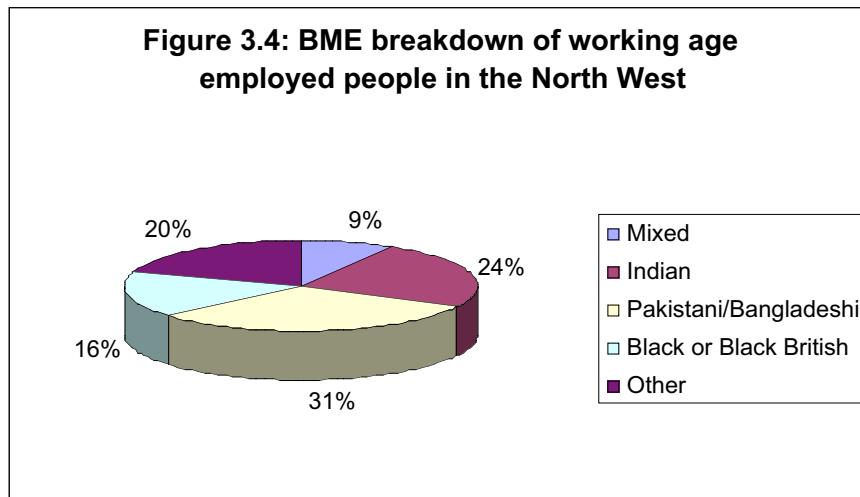
Working age population

3.13 There are some 229,000 people with BME identities within the North West working age population, representing 5.6% of the total¹⁶. This is lower than the England average of 10%. People with an Asian background represent the single largest BME community in the region, numbering some 132,000 persons, 3.2% of the working age population and over half of the entire BME population (Figure 3.3).

¹⁶ This data is from the 2004 Labour Force Survey, which provides more detail than its successor, the Annual Population Survey



3.14 Figure 3.4 shows how the proportion of employed people in BME communities differs from their composition of the working age population.

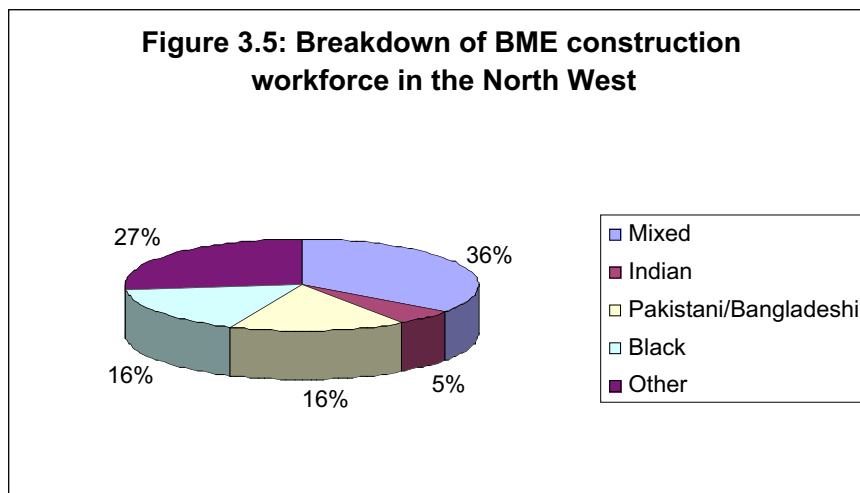


3.15 While they represent 5.6% of the regional working age population, people from BME communities are a smaller percentage of those in employment: 3.9%, compared to 7.8% across England. This suggests that members of BME communities find it harder to secure work than average: White people make up 94% of the regional working age population, and 96% of those in employment.

Within the overall BME grouping, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have the lowest employment rates (42% in the North West compared to the BME average of 51%).

Construction

- 3.16 A full 98% of the region's construction workforce are white, two percentage points higher than their proportion of those employed in all industries across the region. This is reflected in the low numbers of people from BME communities in the sector – just 1.5% of the entire sector workforce. Furthermore, representation is particularly poor among Asian communities (Figure 3.5); if they were as well represented in construction as they are in the employed workforce overall, one would expect to see some 5,000 people from Asian communities in the sector. As it is, the number is just 800.



Disability

Working age population

- 3.17 Disabled people represent 20% - one in five - of the region's working age population (Table 3.1). Within the economically active group of disabled people, unemployment stands at 8%, compared with 4% among the non-disabled (both for the North West and England).

Table 3.1: Disabled people in the working age population¹⁷		
Working age population	England	North West
Disabled		
Number with a disability (DDA and/or work-limiting)	5.62m	844k
Proportion economically active	55%	48%
Proportion of economically active who are unemployed	8%	7%
Non-disabled		
Number of non-disabled	24.9m	3.25m
Proportion economically active	84%	84%
Proportion of economically active who are unemployed	5%	5%

3.18 Because of the strong correlation between disability and age, the ageing of the region's population and workforce is likely to lead to an increase in overall numbers of people with disability over time.

Construction

3.19 Data provided by ConstructionSkills, based on the 2005/06 Labour Force Survey¹⁸, states that 12% of the sector's regional workforce has a disability, compared to 14% across all industries (13% in both cases for England as a whole).

Conclusions

3.20 Construction is an important sector of the economy in the North West, and forecasting suggests that it will continue to grow in the next few years. At the same time, pressure on the sector's traditional source of labour is likely to be squeezed. The Institute for Employment studies, for example, predicts that by 2011, just one in five of the national workforce will be white, male, able-bodied, and under 45. Population growth among BME communities is anticipated to be higher than average, while an ageing population brings an increased likelihood of sickness, injury or disability.

¹⁷ The Annual Population Survey counts DDA disabled as well as those with a work limiting disability

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2006

- 3.21 So, from an employment perspective, there are important reasons why the sector should encourage diversity in order to ensure it is recruiting from as wide a pool of candidates as possible, while minimising its traditional reliance on an increasingly small part of the population. This shift in demographics also means that the customer base of the sector is changing. This is likely to increase demand from customers to see their own diversity reflected in the customer-facing sectors of construction, such as repair and maintenance.
- 3.22 At the same time, the data show that the cumulative effects from being older, coming from a BME community, or being disabled mean that, today, it is less likely for them to be working in the North West construction sector than if they are white, young and able-bodied. This begins with lower than average economic activity rates, and is then compounded by under-representation in construction. BME communities, and especially the region's Asian communities, are particularly poorly represented in the regional sector, as are disabled people. Older people tend to fare better.
- 3.23 What the figures do not show is whether this under-representation is down to choice (some groups may be less inclined to opt for construction careers), discrimination (some groups may be less likely to secure training or work), or a mixture of both. This is a key issue that the remainder of this report will consider.

4 THE VIEWS OF EMPLOYERS

Introduction

- 4.1 In this section, we explore the views of employers within the region's construction sector. This draws heavily on the survey of employers that was undertaken as part of this project, and also includes comments and observations from employers who were interviewed, or who took place in the focus groups.

Survey of employers

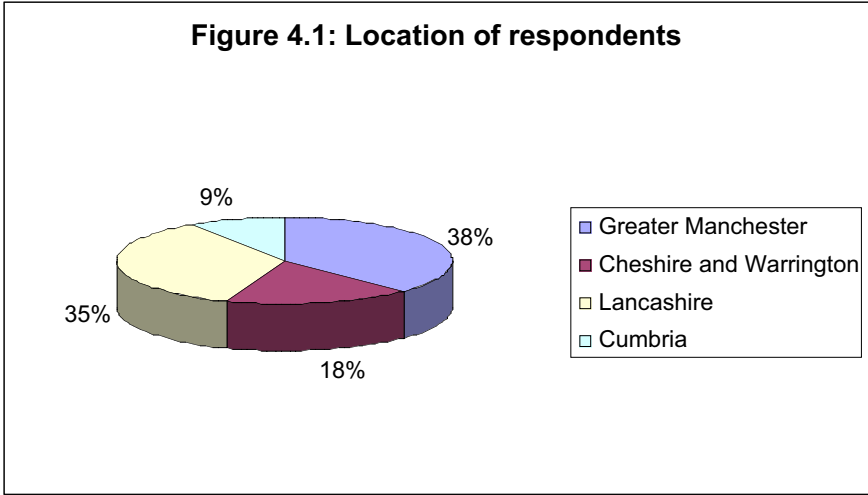
Introduction

- 4.2 A survey of employers was conducted during September and October 2006. In total, 300 employers were interviewed. The sample was drawn from a population of 6,599 firms registered for CITB-ConstructionSkills Levy/Grant, in scope to the Industrial Training Act 1982. Those located in Objective 1 areas were eliminated from the sample (8.9% of the total). While the geographic sample area included those postcodes in Merseyside which do not have Objective 1 status (such as Halton), no firms were identified here from the CITB-ConstructionSkills registered companies database.
- 4.3 Table 4.1 shows the regional spread of interviewed firms by postcode, compared to their proportion of the North West CITB-ConstructionSkills registered companies.

Table 4.1: Location of interviewed firms			
Postcode area	% of NW members of ConstructionSkills	Number of firms interviewed	% of all firms interviewed
Blackburn	8.0%	19	6.3%
Blackpool	4.2%	13	4.3%
Bolton	5.8%	18	6.0%
Carlisle	8.8%	28	9.3%
Chester	5.7%	10	3.3%
Crewe	4.4%	12	4.0%
Lancaster	7.6%	24	8.0%
Manchester	10.4%	35	11.7%
Oldham	5.5%	23	7.7%
Preston	9.4%	31	10.3%
Stockport	7.4%	29	9.7%
Warrington	8.5%	33	11.0%
Wigan	5.1%	25	8.3%
Total	91.1%*	300	100.0%

*Excludes firms located in Objective 1 area (i.e. 8.9% of total regional employers registered for CITB-ConstructionSkills Levy/Grant)

4.4 Figure 4.1 shows the sub-regional distribution of surveyed firms. Greater Manchester and Lancashire comprised 72% of respondents, reflecting their larger population and business densities.



Company size and business activity

4.5 Table 4.2 shows respondent company size. The mean size was 52 employees, with the median falling within the 11-20 employee size band. The difference between the mean and median is in part due to the large size of some firms at the top end of the scale: firms with over 100 employees had a mean workforce of 357.

Table 4.2: Company size

	Number of employees						
	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	50-100	101+
Number of firms	32	30	36	62	78	33	29
Proportion of sample	10%	10%	12%	21%	26%	11%	10%

4.6 Respondents were asked to categorise their business activity. The most common activity given was General Building (18%), followed by Building Repair and Maintenance (11%). All responses are detailed in Table 4.3, along with the firm size by number of employees. Around one in four respondents (26%) represented a firm with between 21 and 50 employees while around one in five had between one and five employees (21%) or more than 50 employees (21%).

Table 4.3: Business activity and company size

Business Activity	Number of firms (count and %)		Number of employees				
			1-5	6-10	11-20	20-50	51+
General Building	55	18%	14	6	9	11	15
Building Repair/Maintenance	34	11%	8	6	5	11	4
Building & Civil Engineering	25	8%	3	2	5	8	7
Painting/Decorating	22	7%	8	1	3	8	2
Civil Engineering	21	7%	0	1	7	6	7
Joiner/Carpenter	20	7%	7	6	4	2	1
Plant hire/repair	13	4%	1	1	2	3	6
Roofing	13	4%	3	3	1	4	2
Scaffolding	13	4%	1	2	4	3	3
Joinery/Manufacture	11	4%	3	1	6	1	0
Other	73	24%	14	7	16	21	15
Totals	300	100%	62	36	62	78	62

4.7 In all, the total number of employees represented by the sample was 15,525, or approximately 7% of the regional construction workforce¹⁹. The roles of employees in the sample firms broke down as follows:

- 3,443 (22%) employed in professional, technical and managerial roles;
- 1,395 (9%) employed as clerical or office staff;
- 10,687 (69%) employed as manual, trade or craft workers.

Employment of key groups

4.8 Three quarters of firms questioned said that they employed workers aged 50 or over. The proportion of older workers varied with company size. Among the self-employed and firms employing fewer than five people, only 48% employed older workers; among firms employing more than 50 people, the rate was 81%

4.9 Over one in four (28%) of respondents said that they employed people from BME communities. Again, there was a disparity according to company size, with only 2% of firms employing people from BME communities among the smallest firms, and 68% among the largest.

4.10 This pattern was repeated with the numbers of disabled employees, where 13% of firms said they employed someone with a disability. This fell to 3% for the smallest firms, and reached 29% for the largest.

4.11 In total, over 94% of respondents were able to provide precise numbers of employees from one or more of these three key groups (Table 4.4). The data show that nearly one quarter of employees of firms who responded were aged over 50, 4% from BME groups, and 8% were disabled people.

4.12 It should be noted that the number of disabled employees quoted will reflect only those known to an employer at the time. Research in the field of disability suggests strongly that many disabled people choose not to declare their impairment to an employer, so the real number of disabled people in the sector is likely to be higher than that stated.

¹⁹ Labour Force Survey, 2005: 229,500 construction employees in the North West

Table 4.4: Employment of Key Groups

Key group	% of firms responding	Total employment in sample	Employees from key group only	Key group as % of workforce
Aged over 50	94%	11,000	2,600	24%
From BME groups	95%	10,700	500	4%
Disabled people	97%	15,400	1,200	8%

4.13 When broken down by firm size (Table 4.5), it is clear that the largest firms do best in employing a larger proportion of their workforce from the three key disadvantaged groups. This may be due to a mixture of factors, including the higher prevalence of equal opportunities policies, more formal recruitment methods, and greater human resources capacity to manage greater diversity. The smallest firms appear to struggle the most, especially on ethnic diversity and the employment of disabled people.

Table 4.5: Key group employment by firm size

Key group	% of employees by firm size					Overall
	1-2	3-10	11-50	51-100	100+	
Aged over 50	27%	21%	21%	18%	29%	24%
From BME groups	0%	2%	2%	3%	6%	4%
Disabled people	2%	1%	1%	5%	12%	8%

4.14 A comparison of these workforce figures with wider labour force statistics for the region has been made in Table 4.6. It is clear that all three groups comprise a smaller proportion of the region's employees compared to their proportions within the working age population as a whole. The proportion of construction employees from BME communities matches the region's employed workforce as a whole (4%), while the proportion aged over 50 (and less those already retired) is two percentage points lower than the overall regional picture (24%, compared to 26%). The greatest difference is among disabled employees, who make up 8% of the region's construction workforce (according to the survey), but 12% of all those employed across the North West.

Table: 4.6: Employment of Key Groups

Employee groups	% of sample workforce	% of all employed in the region*	% of regional working age population*
Aged over 50	24%	26%	29%
From BME communities	4%	4%	6%
Disabled people	8%	12%	20%

*labour market figures for the North West Region (2004/05 Labour Force Survey)

Flexible working practices

- 4.15 Companies (excluding the self-employed) were asked about the extent of flexible working practices in their operations, such as flexi-time or annualised hours, part-time working and job sharing. There was a sharp distinction in approach depending on the role of employees. Only a quarter of firms provided flexible working practices for manual, trade and craft workers. This rose to 44% for professional, technical and managerial staff, and 62% for clerical or office staff.
- 4.16 Company size also matters. Only 9% of firms employing five people or fewer provided flexible working, for example, compared to 66% in firms employing more than 100. The ability to provide flexible working may be impacted by firm size, given that the absence of a single person from a micro business will be more visible, and is likely to have a greater impact, compared to the same person in a large company.
- 4.17 Respondents were asked if their use of flexible working practices had increased over the last three to five years. Whilst over a third (36%) responded affirmatively, from 'very much' to 'a little', the majority (44%) indicated that that their approach had hardly changed at all (Figure 4.2). This suggests a certain amount of inertia within the sector towards flexible working.

4.18 Opinions were split on the potential for greater flexible working in the industry: One in five felt that there was scope for greater use of such practices, while 42% did not believe that they could be used more often. Those who felt that flexible working practices could be used more often gave the following reasons for the current underutilisation:

- That's the way the building trade is, it's stuck in a rut;
- Some companies don't want to introduce them;
- Pressures of meeting time schedules;
- It is male-dominated;
- A lot of firms have set hours;
- Still a new idea;
- Don't need flexitime, staff just ask for time off;
- There are a lack of applicants, people are too lethargic to do it;
- Employers like their staff to be there when required.

Recruitment

4.19 Employers were asked if they faced any current problems in recruitment (Table 4.7). Fewer than half (44%) stated that they had recruitment problems. In terms of occupational groupings, the recruitment of craft, trade and manual workers was judged to be most problematic. The main issues cited here were a lack of relevant skills among applicants (27%), and lack of experience (11%). Only 9% said they had problems with the overall volume of applications. This difficulty in recruitment was not seen to the same extent in the firms' other workforce groups. Fewer than one in five (19%) experienced a problem in recruiting new people for their professional, technical or managerial staff, and a mere 6% registered a problem with recruiting clerical or office staff.

Table 4.7: Problems in Recruitment		
Issue	Craft, trade & manual	Professional, technical & managerial
	Citations (% of all firms)	
Lack of relevant skills amongst applicants	80 (27%)	31 (10%)
Insufficient experience amongst applicants	33 (11%)	14 (5%)
Low number of applicants all together	27 (9%)	16 (5%)
Poor motivation/attitude/personality	13 (4%)	4 (1%)
High level of competition from other companies	5 (2%)	2 (1%)
Getting trustworthy/reliable people	3 (1%)	1 (<1%)
Have to offer more money for better staff	3 (1%)	2 (1%)
Getting quality staff	3 (1%)	1 (<1%)
Others	13 (4%)	9 (3%)

- 4.20 Employers were asked about the recruitment practices that they used (Table 4.8 overleaf). The most common responses were word of mouth and local or regional press advertising, both for trade and professional occupations. Word of mouth recruitment was equally common in small firms as it was in large. The only significant difference was for firms with five or fewer staff, where word of mouth recruitment was mentioned by only 31% of respondents (compared to 48% of all firms). For the smallest firms, ownership may have an impact; many are family-run, which has implications for recruitment (family-focused) as well as succession planning. These figures may be skewed slightly by the fact that 20% of these firms stated that they were not recruiting at present.
- 4.21 Word of mouth was not relied upon as heavily by firms recruiting for professional, technical and managerial roles or clerical and office-based roles. Local/regional press advertising was the leading method used for filling these posts.

Table: 4.8: Methods of Recruitment

Issue	Craft, trade & manual	Professional, technical & managerial
	Citations (% of all firms)	
Word of mouth	144 (48%)	69 (23%)
Local/regional press advertising	120 (40%)	88 (29%)
Jobcentres/other public sector sources	73 (24%)	29 (10%)
Labour supply agencies	25 (8%)	28 (9%)
People contact us about job vacancies	10 (3%)	2 (1%)
National advertising	9 (3%)	18 (6%)
Through apprenticeships	8 (3%)	-
Others	22 (7%)	20 (7%)

Equal opportunities policies and training

4.22 Over half (59%) of respondents stated that they had formal equal opportunity policies. The majority of these policies covered race, sex, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation (Table 4.9). There was a substantial variation of response dependent on the size of firm. Just 10% of firms with fewer than five employees had policies in place, compared to 74% of firms with 21-100 employees, and all firms with a workforce larger than 100.

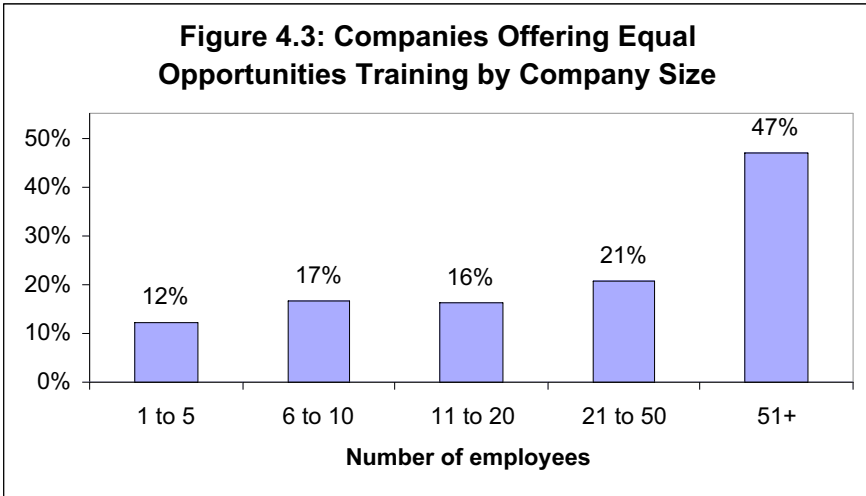
Table: 4.9: Categories Referred to in Equal Opportunities Policies

Category	Citations/percentage of all firms
Race	140 (79%)
Sex	139 (78%)
Disability	135 (76%)
Age	128 (72%)
Religion or belief	119 (67%)
Sexual orientation	108 (61%)
Ex-offenders	81 (46%)
None specifically	28 (16%)
Don't kKnow	5 (3%)

4.23 The majority of equal opportunities policies that were in place covered the following topics:

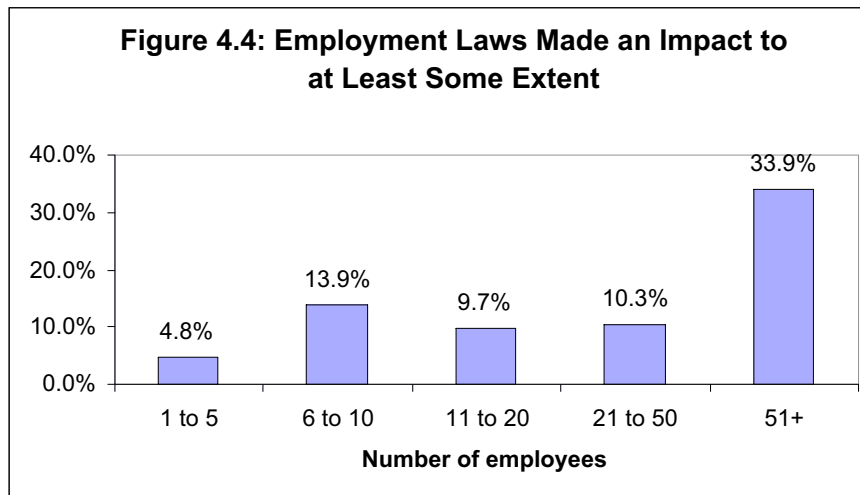
- Equality in recruitment (84%);
- Equality in access to training (80%);
- Procedures for handling harassment complaints (79%);
- Non-discrimination in job advertising (72%).

4.24 Respondents were asked if their companies provided employees with training or development on equal opportunities or related issues. Nearly a quarter (23%) said that they offered equal opportunities training while 73% said that they did not. Companies with more employees were more likely to offer equal opportunities training to their staff (Figure 4.3). Nearly half of companies with over 50 employees offer training in equal opportunities, more than twice as much as any other size category. Other research in the sector by ConstructionSkills suggests that smaller firms can find it difficult to articulate their training needs, and source appropriate training provision.

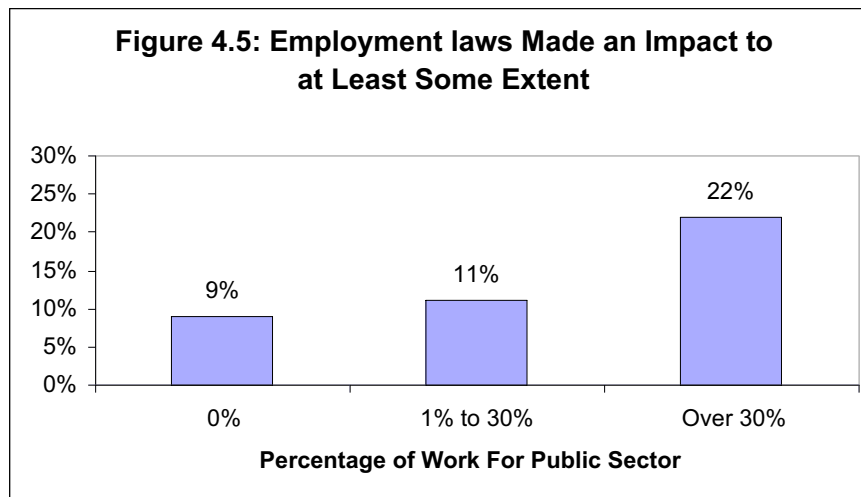


Effect of legislation

- 4.25 Laws that have been introduced to promote equality appear to have had little impact on company recruitment or employment practices, according to the survey's respondents. Nearly three out of four employers (72%) said that such laws had made hardly any difference, if at all, to their recruitment/employment practices.
- 4.26 The employers who said that the laws had made an impact were more likely to be larger employers. One third (34%) of firms with over 50 employees said that laws to protect or promote equality had an impact on recruitment practices, compared to only 10% of firms with 21-50 employees (Figure 4.4).



- 4.27 When these results are split according to the amount of work done for the public sector, it is clear that companies who do a substantial amount of work for the public sector are more likely to have felt the impact of laws and regulations to promote equality (Figure 4.5).



4.28 These impacts have manifested themselves in a variety of ways, the most commonly cited were:

- We now take on a broader range of ages;
- We have changed the wording of adverts;
- We have taken on ex-offenders.

Public sector influence

4.29 A relatively even split of respondent companies' annual turnover came from work with the public sector:

- One third (93 firms) did no work for the public sector;
- A further 32% (97 firms) stated that public sector work constituted up to 30% of their turnover; and
- The final third (94 firms) said that public sector work accounted for over 30% of their turnover.

4.30 When considered by firm size (Table 4.10), it is clear that smaller firms are more likely to do less or no work for the public sector (44% of one and two person businesses do no work for public sector clients). Larger firms tend to have more of

a reliance on public sector contracts, especially those employing between 51 and 100 people, where 45% of firms relied on the sector for more than 30% of their turnover. This is confirmed by other ConstructionSkills research, which shows that two-thirds of micro-businesses do no public sector work, and more than one in four do nothing other than domestic work.

Table 4.10: Extent of public sector work by firm size						
Proportion of annual turnover	Firm size					
	1-2	3-10	11-50	51-100	100+	All firms
None	44%	36%	30%	18%	24%	31%
<30%	25%	38%	32%	27%	34%	32%
>30%	25%	20%	36%	45%	28%	31%
Don't know	6%	6%	2%	9%	14%	5%

- 4.31 Employers who undertook at least some public sector work were asked if they had done anything to gear recruitment and employment practices to meet public sector diversity requirements. Companies for whom public sector work comprised more than 30% of their turnover were almost three times more likely to have changed their practices to be in line with public sector requirements (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11: Employers who have changed recruitment / employment practices to meet public sector requirements (excludes those who do no public sector work)		
Response	Percentage of Public sector work	
	1-30%	Over 30%
Yes	8 (11%)	28 (30%)
In process	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
No	59 (83%)	61 (65%)
Don't know	3 (4%)	4 (4%)

4.32 The types of actions which were most often mentioned by employers in order to comply with public sector requirements were:

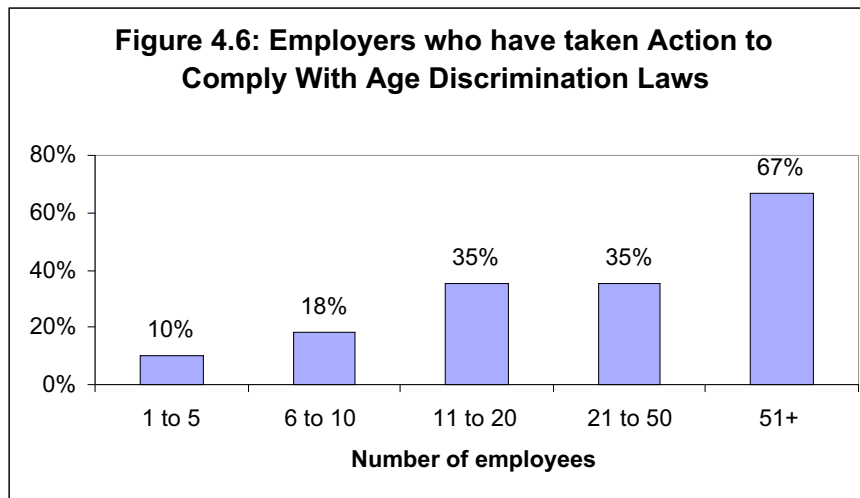
- Changed/updated policies;
- Try and employ local people;
- Security screening;
- Competency/CSCS cards.

New age legislation

4.33 Eighty percent of respondents said that they were aware of the recently introduced age discrimination law (the survey took place as the law changed in October 2007). However, the smallest companies (1-5 employees) were much less likely to be aware of the new law than other firms. Only 61% of respondents in this group were aware of the new law, compared to the overall average of 80% (Table 4.12).

Firm size	Percentage aware
1 to 5 employees	61%
6 to 10 employees	86%
11 to 20 employees	81%
21 to 50 employees	87%
51+ employees	84%

4.34 Of those who were aware of the new legislation, one-third (33%) had either already taken action to prepare for its impact, or were planning to (Figure 4.6). Again, smaller companies were much more likely not to have done anything than their larger counterparts; two-thirds (67%) of firms with over 50 employees had already taken, or planned to take, some action.



4.35 When asked about what actions they might take in response to the new legislation, the following comments were made:

- We are re-writing/introducing policies to comply;
- We plan to find out more information;
- Age is not an issue for us/we employ people of all ages;
- Date of birth has been taken off application forms;
- Advertising has been checked to ensure we are not breaking any laws;
- We have told all of our employees their rights.

Attitudes to employing older workers

4.36 Firms were asked if there were any advantages to employing older workers (those aged over 50). Four out of five (80%) mentioned at least one advantage. The most common answers were:

- More experienced (61%);
- Reliability/trustworthiness (18%);

- Knowledge (15%);
- Better skills (10%);
- Loyalty/dedication (7%).

4.37 Fewer firms, although still a majority (54%), said that there were disadvantages when employing older workers. The responses given most often were:

- Physical fitness (32%);
- Greater risk of illness / time off for health reasons (13%);
- Wouldn't be employed for long (5%);
- Slow to do work (5%);
- Too set in their ways (4%).

4.38 Respondents were invited to suggest ways to improve the chances of older workers gaining employment in the construction industry in the North West. 114 (38%) made suggestions; the most commonly repeated of these are shown in Table 4.13.

Table: 4.13: Suggestions to Improve the Chances of Older People Being Employed in The Construction Industry	
Suggestion	Citations/percentage of all firms
Highlight prior experience in the industry	15 (5%)
Improve access to training	14 (5%)
Raise employers awareness	12 (4%)
Have to be physically fit/mentally alert	11 (4%)
Demonstrate relevant skills/ability to do the job	10 (3%)

Attitudes to employing people from ethnic minorities

4.39 Respondents were asked to name the advantages of recruiting people from ethnic minority backgrounds; slightly less than one in five (19%) employers was able to name at least one advantage. The main advantages given were:

- Gives workforce a greater understanding of other races/cultures (4%);
- Hard-working (3%);
- Provides a positive image for the firm (3%);
- Can bring new approaches to the company (3%);
- Cheaper workforce (2%);
- More balanced workforce (2%).

4.40 Conversely, respondents were asked if there were any disadvantages in recruiting people from an ethnic minority background. There were various references to the effect that 'other people' would have a problem (co-workers, customers, etc). More specifically, one in four employers (25%) was able to name a perceived disadvantage:

- Language barriers (11%);
- Racism / resentment among workforce (5%);
- Won't 'fit in' (3%);
- Time off for religious observance (2%).

4.41 Firms were also asked if they could suggest any ways to improve the chances of people from ethnic minority backgrounds gaining employment in the construction industry. One-third (33%) of respondents made at least one suggestion (Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Suggestions to Improve the Chances of Ethnic Minorities Being Employed in The Construction Industry

Suggestion	Citations/percentage of all firms
Learn English	17 (6%)
Apply for the jobs	10 (3%)
Relevant qualifications	9 (3%)
Mix with other races	9 (3%)
Make training available	8 (3%)

Attitudes to employing disabled people

- 4.42 Employers were asked if they were aware of the public sector duty to promote equality for disabled people, due to come into force in December 2006. Just over one third of respondents (37%) said that they were aware of this new duty. Interestingly, however, there was no discernable difference in the responses from small as opposed to large employers, or from businesses with differing amounts of work done for the public sector.
- 4.43 Although awareness of the new legislation was similar across all groups, the likelihood of being prepared for the new duties was affected by the amount of public sector work done by the responding company. Of the companies aware of the duty, only 7% had prepared for its introduction and 12% were in the process of doing so. However, nearly one-third (30%) of firms with the largest proportion of public sector work planned to prepare for the new duty (Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: Companies Prepared for New Duties to Promote Equality for Disabled People by Amount of public sector Work

Response	Proportion of work undertaken for the public sector		
	0%	1-30%	Over 30%
Yes	-	3 (7%)	5 (15%)
In process	2 (6%)	5 (12%)	5 (15%)
No	29 (91%)	33 (80%)	23 (70%)
Don't know	1 (3%)	-	-

4.44 Sixteen percent of employers were able to state specific advantages of recruiting disabled people. The most commonly cited responses were:

- gives workforce a greater understanding of disability (3%);
- hard-working (2%);
- positive image for the firm (1%).

4.45 On the other hand, 69% of employers mentioned at least one disadvantage of employing disabled workers:

- health and safety concerns (21%);
- may not be physically fit/able (21%);
- might not be able to do the job (17%);
- access problems (8%);
- more expensive (3%) – no elaboration available, but assumed to refer to adjustments that might need to be made in the workplace.

4.46 In answering both of these questions – the advantages and disadvantages of employing disabled people – a substantial number of respondents stated that it depended on the individual and type of impairment (5% for the ‘advantage’ question, and 22% for the ‘disadvantage’ question). This would seem to suggest that a number of employers are at least aware that the consideration of a disabled person for a job depends on an individual’s specific circumstances, rather than a stereotypical view of a disabled person.

4.47 Respondents were asked to make suggestions to improve the likelihood of people with a disability gaining employment in the construction industry. Just under one third (30%) made a suggestion, with the most common shown in Table 4.16. The reference to clerical jobs appears to show that a small number of employers make assumptions about what a disabled person can, and cannot do in the construction workplace.

Table: 4.16: Suggestions to Improve the Chances of People with a Disability Being Employed in The Construction Industry

Suggestion	Citations/percentage of all firms
Demonstrate relevant skills	13 (4%)
Depends on level of disability	11 (4%)
Sell themselves	8 (3%)
Apply for the jobs	8 (3%)
Focus on clerical jobs	8 (3%)

Diversity

4.48 Employers were also asked to comment more generally on the advantages of employing a more diverse workforce; one-third of employers were able to specify at least one advantage, the most popular being:

- better skills (5%);
- different approaches to dealing with issues at work (5%);
- more experience (4%);
- fosters a greater understanding of other groups among the workforce (4%);
- a greater pool of workers to choose from (4%).

4.49 To close the survey employers were invited to make any other comments. 22% of respondents took up this opportunity, the most common responses were as follows:

- if someone is capable of doing the job, shouldn't be a problem;
- lack of interest in construction among the young;
- BME and the young have 'attitude problems';
- applicants should be judged on merit, quotas are not helpful.

Interviews and focus groups with employers

4.50 Direct, face-to-face contact with employers has elicited more information on employer views, which have, on the whole, mirrored those coming out of the survey.

Recruitment

4.51 Employers said that the number of applicants for jobs is currently very high, and they do not perceive any short-term problems with filling posts. However, there is a lack of well-qualified and experienced workers, something which has led employers to recruit from overseas, particularly Central Europe.

4.52 Word of mouth recruitment, or speculative approaches from individuals were high on the list of recruitment methods. On larger construction sites, for example, it is common for individuals seeking work to turn up on site and apply. This provides an opportunity for site management to select on the basis of what a person looks like first, rather than judging them on the content of an application form.

Flexible working

4.53 Employers noted that the majority of flexible working arrangements were for women, and predominantly among office staff. Flexible working tended to be available 'on demand', rather than as a specifically promoted part of the employment package. Firms confirmed that working hours for some elements of the industry were limited, for example on noisy construction sites, which did have implications for the extent to which flexible working could be offered to employees. However, in other trades, such as shopfitting, there was capacity to work around the clock.

Public sector influence

4.54 Firms working for the public sector confirmed that the client-led approach on initiatives, such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on numbers of employees from a local community, were certainly helping to encourage workforce diversity. While the more general view is that such efforts are not really impacting on private sector construction work, in at least one case, the approach has been embraced for contracts where KPIs are not stipulated.

Diversity

- 4.55 Employers perceived that the construction sector had become more diverse in recent years, with applicants from different backgrounds having been encouraged to apply in greater numbers by customers and industry bodies. However, they recognised that there was still room for improvement.
- 4.56 For some, the result of this has been the development of a more tolerant workplace, with less of a 'macho', 'horseplay' culture, contributing to improved health and safety performance and a more tolerant relaxed working environment. Language barriers do still exist with some BME communities, and some firms help employees with ESOL courses.
- 4.57 For other firms, the main benefit of employing a more diverse workforce is that it gives the business a better public image, which is viewed as especially useful when bidding for public sector contracts.

Age discrimination

- 4.58 Discrimination of older workers is not perceived as an issue for the sector by employers. Their experience is highly valued, as is their work ethic (the lack of which was a regular criticism of younger people). Improvements to the working environment over recent years, plus the use of new technology, are thought to have increased the potential for employees to stay on longer.
- 4.59 Older trainees are now coming into the sector from a variety of backgrounds, often attracted to the sector by television programmes about building, renovating or refurbishing homes. However, employers recognised that it could cost more to train an older person, and that funding support from the Government was not as readily available as for young people. Some older workers, returning to the sector after time away, were said to be limited by health problems, which were a consequence of poorer health and safety standards of the past.
- 4.60 Employers thought that the employment of older workers would be more of an issue for smaller companies because there was less opportunity to use large-scale mechanisation in place of physical human effort.

Ethnicity

- 4.61 Employers thought that there was a reluctance to recruit people from BME communities, because of a fear of the potential legal consequences if anything went wrong (such as harassment in the workplace).
- 4.62 Employers thought that the Asian community in particular were not that enthusiastic about construction as a career, because of its perceived focus on manual labour and lack of professional advance. Apprentices from Asian communities that did enter the industry wanted to start their own businesses and work for their own communities. This was contrasted with workers from Afro-Caribbean communities, who appeared to fare better as a whole, and where there was more of a tradition of participation in the industry.
- 4.63 In cases where a construction firm has direct contact with the public, such as with residential refurbishment, the benefits of employing people from BME communities were recognised. It allowed workers to enter people's houses who were from the same ethnic background or religion, and often helped with communication where a resident might not speak English. However, employers also recognised that there were sometimes residential areas in the North West where they would not send ethnic minority workers, in case they were subjected to racial abuse or worse.

Disability

- 4.64 There was a tendency for employers to focus on overt physical disabilities when responding to questions about wider disability discrimination. Many noted that they employ, or have employed, disabled people within their office staff, but that the situation was much more difficult for work on site, because of health and safety issues. Hearing and visual impairments tended to be regarded as less of a 'problem', along with some mental health impairments (as long as the employer was made aware of the situation).

Conclusions

Recruitment

- 4.65 Employers do not regard labour supply difficulties as a sufficient reason to diversify their existing workforce. While the long-term availability of construction labour from 'traditional' (i.e. white, young, non-disabled, male) sources may be in doubt, we did not detect any real concerns about this from employers, who are more focused on the labour needs of their existing or forthcoming contracts. Where experienced workers are required in the short-term, Central Europe is currently seen to provide a ready source of skilled labour, although the long-term reliability of supply is an issue particularly if the economic condition in their home country improves. Ultimately, the use of migrant workers is not considered a sustainable solution in terms of encouraging investment in the UK labour market.
- 4.66 The primary means by which construction firms recruit their on-site labour – word of mouth – is likely to constitute a significant barrier to the employment of a more diverse workforce. This approach accesses new recruits through the social and business networks of existing employees. This is unlikely to attract a more diverse workforce, rather it would be more likely to reinforce the recruitment and retention of 'likes', allowing the industry to continue to recruit from the usual sources of labour. Press advertising is less likely to have such a reinforcing effect, although much will depend on where precisely adverts are placed (some press outlets may not be accessed equally by all groups in society).

Flexible working

- 4.67 The significantly higher rate of flexible working for office and clerical staff is likely to be a reflection of the gender profile of this group of employees, where women have traditionally held the majority of jobs, many of whom may have childcare responsibilities. To an extent, it may also reflect differences in the demands of a job and the working environment. Desk-based jobs, for example, may be just as easily undertaken at irregular hours, while on-site work may have to be completed within a very strict time window.
- 4.68 What these findings do reflect, however, is that the majority of firms are not against flexible working per se, but there is perhaps an opportunity for such practices to be

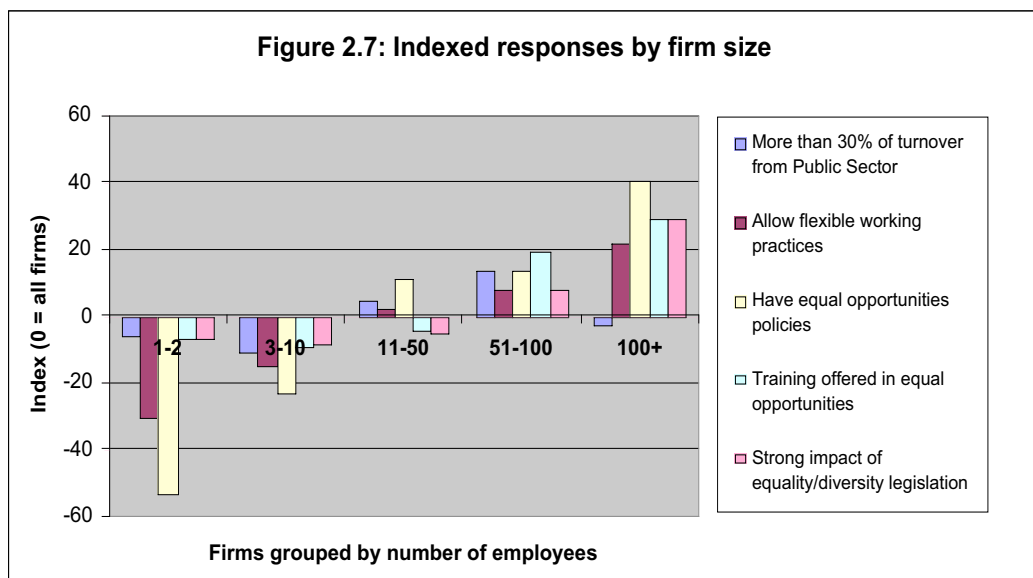
more actively promoted by employers, especially among manual, trade and craft workers.

Impact of legislation and the public sector

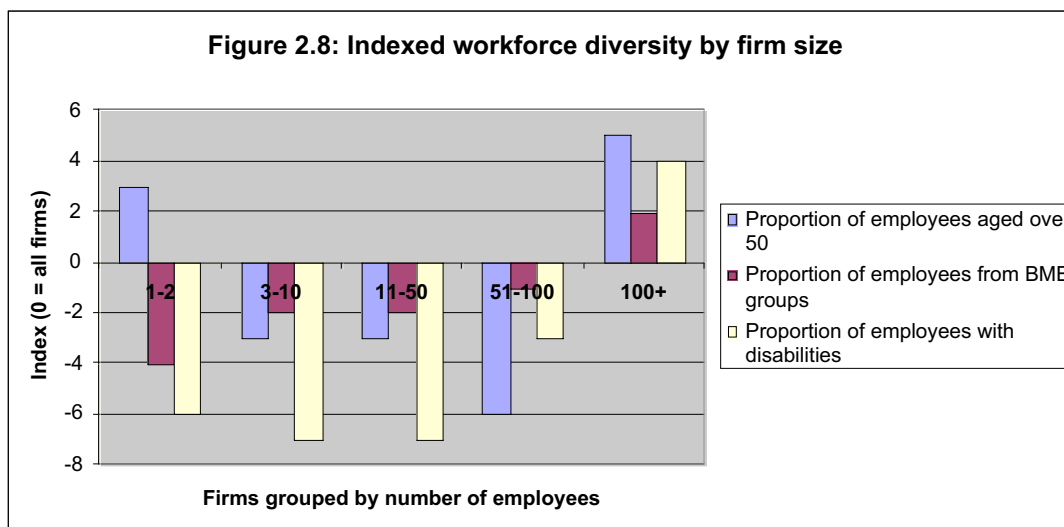
4.69 While anti-discrimination legislation is not viewed as having had much of an impact on employers, it is clear that those working for the public sector are being increasingly influenced by the client-led approach to the promotion of a more diverse workforce. It is perhaps too early in the development of such initiatives to say whether they will eventually change the profile of the sector as a whole.

Firm size

4.70 There is a substantial difference between large and small firms in the fields of workforce diversity and equality issues. Table 2.7 provides a summary of some key survey findings by firm size. Responses have been indexed, so zero represents the average response from all 300 firms surveyed. The table therefore shows the extent to which size of firm affects the relevant variables. It is clear from the table that firm size is of direct relevance to whether or not a firm responds to, or is impacted by, equality and diversity issues (an assumption here is that more work with the public sector has a direct influence in this regard, and that flexible working is likely to improve workforce diversity).



- 4.71 To some extent, this may be linked to administrative capacity. Larger firms are likely to have access to a personnel or human resources function which will enable it to provide a response to issues such as a change in regulations, or the provision of flexible working practices and equal opportunities training.
- 4.72 This can be contrasted with the extent of workforce diversity within the respondent firms, as shown in Figure 2.8 and again on an indexed scale. While the picture is less clear-cut overall, there does appear to be a similar pattern emerging regarding workforce diversity and firm size.



- 4.73 While it is not possible to assert a direct correlation between the data set out in the two tables above, it does suggest that there may be some relationship between formal efforts to overcome institutional discrimination, be that through legislation, action by public sector customers or firms themselves, and improving workforce diversity. Furthermore, larger firms seem more able to effect the necessary change.
- 4.74 There are two important issues that arise from this. The first is that larger firms, who currently have a slightly better diversity profile, might be encouraged to share their experiences within their own supply chains in order to cascade best practice to smaller companies. The second issue is that, more generally, greater effort is likely to be required with smaller firms if workforce diversity is going to be improved

across the sector as a whole. However, due to capacity issues, smaller firms are more likely to require external assistance to improve their performance. Importantly, as was highlighted in Section Three of this report, small firms represent the vast majority of firms in the sector, so they cannot be ignored.

Age discrimination

- 4.75 The employment figures from the survey suggest that older workers are still being retained at reasonably healthy rates within the sector. This is reinforced by employers' needs for experienced workers, and the value they place on hard work, dedication and reliability. Nevertheless, concerns about physical fitness remain.

Racial and ethnic discrimination

- 4.76 Employers struggle to identify any substantial advantages that may result from a more ethnically diverse workforce, aside from the social benefit of improving cultural understanding, and developing a more positive image for the company. The advantages are perhaps clearer where a firm is dealing with BME residents and customers directly.
- 4.77 There are clearly some substantial barriers with regard to ethnicity. Language problems are stated as an issue for some firms, and these ought to be possible to address. Of greater concern, perhaps, is that employers fear that workers from BME communities might, by their presence, 'trigger' racism or resentment among the existing workforce. At best, this suggests that employers may see themselves as 'protecting' ethnic minorities from racism by not employing them in the first place, or are protecting themselves against perceived legal problems arising from racial harassment in the workplace.

Disability discrimination

- 4.78 Of the three key groups this project is looking at, it is perhaps most difficult to make generalised conclusions about disabled people, because of the wide range of impairments, and the extent to which they affect individuals differently. This is reflected in the survey responses, where a number of respondents qualified their answers by saying 'it depends' on the type of disability.

4.79 However, it is possible to say that the numbers of disabled people within the sector are low, compared to their proportion of the Region's working age population as a whole, more so than for older workers and those from ethnic minorities. Employers are concerned primarily about health and safety issues, and whether or not a disabled person is able to do their job. Perhaps surprisingly, cost of adjustments and access issues, while mentioned, were not high on the list of disadvantages. Awareness of the new public sector duty on disability also appears to be quite low.

5 THE VIEWS OF TRAINEES AND EMPLOYEES

Introduction

- 5.1 Four focus groups were conducted with trainees and employees, covering both genders and a range of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and geographical locations (Rochdale, Manchester, Burnley and Bolton). The focus groups provided a relaxed and informal atmosphere in which people were able to comment freely and openly about discrimination and diversity issues in the construction sector. The responses from the focus groups have been arranged by thematic headings, in part to ensure the anonymity of respondents.
- 5.2 No specific focus group was held for disabled workers and trainees in the construction sector. This was due to problems in identifying sufficient participants, and difficulties in setting the parameters for discussion. The absence of a focus group for disabled people was addressed through further interviews with disability bodies and firms.

Reasons for choosing construction

- 5.3 The reasons why people chose to enter the construction sector were quite common, irrespective of an individual's background. A large majority of participants said that they had been influenced primarily by family members (usually a father or uncle) who were already in the sector. Other important factors were:
- decent rates of pay;
 - the opportunity to work outdoors, rather than in an office;
 - flexibility about when and where you work; and
 - the ability to develop a trade, acquire qualifications and possibly become your own boss over time.
- 5.4 Some Asian Muslim participants said that some within their communities viewed construction work as 'dirty' and not a positive career choice, although it was

thought that this stemmed from a more general lack of awareness about the industry as a whole.

- 5.5 Participants thought that schools had not provided sufficient information about the career opportunities within the sector, where there was an increasing focus on encouraging pupils into higher education. Schemes to encourage people into the industry were also not well advertised, according to the participants. Most of those who were on specific support schemes had heard about them 'by chance' through word of mouth.

Race and religion in the workplace

- 5.6 Race and religious issues were a significant element of the focus group agenda. Generally, there was a recognition by older construction workers from BME communities that progress had been made in improving attitudes towards ethnic minorities in recent years, and that the sector in the North West was visibly more diverse than it had been. One BME participant said that he used to feel the tension that his presence caused; things had now improved.
- 5.7 Some BME participants within the focus groups saw themselves as representing their own communities within the construction industry, and having to work that bit harder and better as a result. One participant said that he had to work to help some colleagues overcome their prejudices - "*work twice as hard to prove yourself. . .let your skills and professionalism speak for themselves so that they see beyond your skin colour*".
- 5.8 Many BME participants said that they still had to tolerate some use of offensive language from their work colleagues in casual conversation, although this was not usually directed at individuals. Older workers were more 'guilty' of using inappropriate language than younger employees, which was felt to be a generational issue reflecting how society's values and opinions had changed with time.
- 5.9 Some participants found it difficult to discuss issues such as religion, or religious practices (such as fasting) with workers of different faiths. This was sometimes exacerbated by discussions within the workforce about stories from the press regarding the Iraq War, or terrorist incidents. However, there was a general

recognition that relationships in the workplace took a while to develop and, over time there was increased acceptance.

5.10 The focus groups highlighted a number of examples where trainees and workers said that they had faced more direct forms of discrimination in the sector. These included:

- Unfair treatment in training, including the loss of coursework by training delivery bodies and difficulties in securing work placements with firms;
- Reduced financial remuneration in the form of unpaid overtime;
- Limited potential for advancement, such as being offered restricted training opportunities and being regularly passed over for promotion; and
- Incidents of direct racial abuse and harassment, from fellow workers as well as customers, including one serious physical attack.

5.11 These examples, while not necessarily indicative of a wider problem, nevertheless highlight the fact that more direct forms of discrimination continue to exist within the region's construction sector.

5.12 There was some sub-regional difference in the responses on race and religion issues. Trainees and workers from Manchester, for example, were less likely to view these as significant problems, arguing that the extent of diversity within the city's population, and therefore at school, meant that it was natural and easier for them to work in a multi-ethnic team. This was less the case with participants from Lancashire and Rochdale, where different ethnic communities were regarded as being more isolated from one another, so there was less understanding and tolerance of people's different backgrounds.

Rights and responsibilities

5.13 A number of BME trainees were unaware of the rights they had with regard to protection from racial or religious harassment in the workplace. At the same time, many older BME workers expressed their reluctance to bring up such harassment with their management, for fear of risking their future employment prospects.

Attitudes to older workers

- 5.14 With the exception of the use of language mentioned above, apprentices and workers in the focus groups were very positive about the role that older people played in the workplace. In particular, they valued the experience that older workers brought to the work and their willingness to share their knowledge.

Migrant labour

- 5.15 A few young apprentices and trainees were concerned about the increasing use of migrant labour, especially from Central Europe, within the regional construction sector. Migrant workers were viewed as a ready source of experienced labour for firms who demanded entry-level wages. The participants felt that they might lose out on job opportunities

Suggestions for the future

- 5.16 The focus groups were encouraged to provide suggestions about how diversity could be improved within the North West construction sector. These are provided overleaf.

Suggestions from the focus groups

- Increase the promotion of the sector in schools and youth clubs, including the professional roles, shedding its 'muddy' image and focusing on the potential for good wages
- Provide more opportunities for taster sessions and work experience
- Use alternative advertising methods to reach non-traditional groups, including television
- Encourage mentoring from established BME workers in the industry for new trainees and apprentices
- Signpost and support intermediary schemes and bodies that can help individuals from non-traditional groups overcome initial employer reluctance to take them on, as well as supporting the employers themselves
- Try to avoid placing or employing people from BME communities singly, as this can increase the feelings of isolation
- Consider ways to improve the retention of BME workers in the sector. This might include more action to ensure that pay levels and training and promotion opportunities are safeguarded against discrimination
- BME employees need to have coping strategies to deal with the challenge of working in the sector. Change has taken place, but there is still work to be done and individuals need to be realistic and be able to deal with the challenges that they are likely to face

Other outcomes of the focus groups

- 5.17 In addition to the comments of the participants, there were a number of other, unintentional, outcomes from the focus group sessions:

- They brought together a range of individuals who work within similar trades or whose companies work together, and helped them to establish new contacts;
- It offered the opportunity to hear about how others had addressed the challenge of dealing with harassment and offensive behaviour in the workplace;
- It provided participants with an environment where they could share their experiences and learn about practices - good and bad - in other companies;
- It offered a real account of working life to compare with senior managers' perceptions of practice within their companies.

Conclusions

5.18 The focus group sessions provide a very interesting and honest view of the construction sector in the North West from the perspective of its workers, current and future. The picture they painted was of a sector which had improved its treatment and acceptance of workers from BME groups over time, but which still had some way to go in improving workforce diversity. While there were some specific instances of direct harassment in the workplace, the majority of barriers identified reflect institutional discrimination, namely:

- The lack of awareness of the sector's career opportunities, both within certain communities and more generally at school level, which is likely to reduce the pool of young people prepared to give the sector a go;
- The difficulties in overcoming employer reluctance to 'take a risk' by employing or providing a placement to someone who does not fit the traditional construction worker stereotype;
- The extent to which workers from minority groups expect to have to build up a high level of tolerance and mental toughness to cope with feelings of isolation, as well as instances of obvious or more subtle forms of discrimination; and

- The lack of awareness among trainees and younger workers about their legal right to be protected from discrimination, and a reluctance among older workers to exercise these rights.

5.19 Comparatively, the suggestions made by employers about how to improve diversity in the construction sector and those made by trainees and employees themselves highlight an interesting point. It is evident that employers tended to regard the solution as lying with the individuals themselves, for example learning English, applying for jobs, and ensuring physical fitness. However, the employees and trainees highlighted solutions that tended to be directed at employers – using alternative job advertising methods, addressing discrimination in pay levels and promotion opportunities, and improving the promotion of the sector. This highlights a potentially important aspect of institutional discrimination – that some employers currently do not regard addressing discrimination within the workforce as being either part of their responsibility, or within their capacity.

5.20 This is a very important finding. The attitudes, behaviour and culture of an organisation, be it a business or any other body, are integral to the way in which it responds to issues like diversity. The focus for action therefore needs to be on changing business and employer attitudes towards ‘non-traditional’ construction workers, rather than expecting these individuals simply to ‘fit in’ with the existing culture, especially if that culture is hostile or unwelcoming.

6 THE VIEWS OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Introduction

- 6.1 Twenty-three consultations were conducted with training and education organisations, housing associations, and other public sector bodies in order to get their perspectives on institutional discrimination in the sector.

Training and education organisations

Barriers to diversity

- 6.2 Funding was the dominant issue raised by consultees. Changes to government funding regulations in further education have meant that training provision and support is heavily biased in favour of younger people. This means that colleges are often obliged to focus on the 16-19 age group, a key area for the LSC. Only limited government funding for adults is available, such as to those that have been long-term unemployed, which can be quite difficult to access.
- 6.3 Other funding issues raised included the reduction in finance for ESOL language courses, and reduced funding for evening classes. The latter was believed to be affecting efforts to attract a more diverse range of students, with older workers, women needing childcare and BME students all thought to prefer flexible training opportunities.
- 6.4 In higher education, there is a concern that tuition fees will have a negative effect on attracting students from the most disadvantaged groups in society.
- 6.5 Consultees highlighted a range of other barriers to increasing diversity in the industry from the perspective of education and training:
- **School attainment:** low attainment at school limits progression to college and further training, which often hits the most disadvantaged groups the worst;

- **Perceptions of the sector:** construction was not viewed as sufficiently professional within some ethnic groups. Encouraging them to become craft workers was particularly hard;
- **Employer awareness:** there are small numbers of disabled construction students, but employers fear they will not be able to do the job;
- **No lack of applicants:** good application rates mean there is no requirement for colleges to go looking for learners. One college department was “bursting at the seams”;
- **Employer preference for experience:** employers would prefer to hire older, more experienced workers than to invest in training the young. This includes sourcing workers from abroad.

6.6 One consultee reported a relatively high and growing intake of Asian learners, perhaps reflecting the fact that construction is held in higher esteem and people know they can make a good living from it. However, this higher participation has not transferred to the workplace as many Asian learners tend to go into the family business and very often service their own communities. There was no acknowledged problem in terms of attracting Afro-Caribbean learners.

Promoting diversity

6.7 A number of suggestions were made that might succeed in promoting a more diverse workforce, again from the perspective of the learning environment:

- **Link up with other construction departments** in other colleges to share best practice; it was acknowledged that not enough of this sort of activity was happening;
- **Promote transfers between courses.** One college had successfully persuaded trainees to switch courses into construction once they were at college;
- **Focus on disadvantaged areas**, rather than just certain groups, for example through the use of bursaries linked to postcodes;

- **Get into schools early to promote** – has worked in one college in terms of closing the gender gap in construction training; variable effectiveness;
- **Consider retention and career destinations** for disadvantaged groups, rather than targets for training courses;
- **Provide diversity training and awareness for college staff** so that they are better able to engage and support learners and applicants from disadvantaged groups;
- **Draw on success stories from other sectors** such as catering and hospitality where ethnic diversity has been more successful.

Housing associations and public sector customers

Public sector persuasion

- 6.8 Larger firms have grasped the need to comply with diversity KPIs, but this has been more problematic for smaller firms, either because of capacity issues or an unwillingness to have their employment practices ‘manipulated’ by the customer.
- 6.9 On the whole, KPIs are having an impact on encouraging recruitment from local disadvantaged communities, even though some firms struggle with their specific targets. KPIs are now increasingly being cascaded to subcontractors.

Ethnicity

- 6.10 It was widely believed that parents within some BME groups had a preference for more academic vocations than construction for their children. Where this was not the case, there was pressure on young people to earn money quickly, and most construction training courses limit that possibility. Those who do train to enter the industry often end up in family run businesses which aren’t necessarily in the construction sector.
- 6.11 The industry still has a ‘macho’ image, which expects its workforce to be comfortable with certain jokes, horseplay and language as a result. This was viewed as being very off-putting to some BME communities. In addition, the frequent need to travel with the job was also thought to put off some ethnic groups

from developing a career in the sector.

- 6.12 Consultees had little evidence of overt racism within the industry. There was a concern, however, that managers would struggle to deal with such behaviour, having tolerated it in the past. There was evidence of racism among customers, for example being turned away from someone's house, rather than being let in to do their job.

Promoting diversity

- 6.13 A large number of suggestions were made by consultees about how to improve diversity and tackle discrimination in the construction industry:
- **Visible proactivity:** the response from employers to the recruitment of a disabled person, for example, is almost always reactive; firms tend to consider an issue only when there is an immediate need. Being more proactive could be more cost effective, as well as encouraging more people from disadvantaged groups to come forward in the first place;
 - **Invite contractors to customer diversity training:** one housing association includes team leaders from its contractors on its internal equality and diversity training;
 - **Provide mentoring:** there are a number of examples where this has proved to help raise aspirations and improve retention;
 - **Cascade good practice:** larger firms are more 'externally aware' of their responsibilities on diversity. This needs to be cascaded down to smaller firms, perhaps through subcontractor relationships. In some public sector contracts, KPIs are already stipulated for subcontractors;
 - **Change working culture:** it is no longer enough to say that one's employment depends solely on the ability to 'do the job', but responsibilities extend into the fair treatment of one's co-workers;

- **Focus on customer satisfaction:** consider discrimination as a business issue, that is the need to satisfy an increasingly diverse customer base, rather than a legal requirement which does not engender much enthusiasm for change;
- **Pairing:** there are examples where people from disadvantaged groups have found it helpful to work in pairs or groups with people from the same background. It can be very isolating, for example, to be the only non-white face on a construction site;
- **Frontline forums:** provide a forum for 'front line' workers (site managers, tradespeople, etc.) to meet and share experiences about diversity issues. This already happens in one housing association, and is proving successful;
- **All cultures count:** in recognising the needs of minority religions and cultures, it is important not to ignore 'majority' cultures, as this can breed resentment.

7 THE VIEWS OF DIVERSITY INTERMEDIARIES

- 7.1 Twelve diversity intermediaries were consulted in order to get an expert view of discrimination issues and how they might be addressed, drawing on experience beyond the North West and the construction industry.

Disability discrimination

The Disability Equality Duty

- 7.2 Substantial efforts are under way to ensure that public sector bodies are prepared for the Equality Duty that came into effect in December 2006. While the focus of current efforts is on the public sector, these organisations will have to review their procurement strategies as a result. This may mean that the duty will, in effect, flow through into public sector contractors.
- 7.3 Currently, there is no capacity within equalities bodies to educate firms directly about the potential impacts of the Statutory Duty – the focus is on public bodies - and no action is planned in the near future. There is perhaps a role here for construction industry bodies to perform.

Deselection

- 7.4 The argument that some disabled people ‘deselect’ themselves from working in a particular industry is not unique to construction, and may be misleading. It often reflects a lack of understanding about who disabled people are – disability is a very broad concept. Often, businesses will not know that they are employing disabled people, because employees may be reluctant to divulge such information, for fear of negative consequences. This suggests that the number of disabled people in the industry workforce, as indicated by the employer survey, is likely to be an underestimate.
- 7.5 However, it is also possible that the sector is not promoting itself as a career choice for disabled people, which may put off some disabled people from applying in the first place.

Employer attitudes

- 7.6 There are a number of common attitudes that employers have when it comes to disability:
- Many firms misunderstand the concept of 'reasonable adjustment' and assume it will be complex and costly to implement, which is not the case;
 - Recruiting someone with a disability is sometimes seen as a 'leap of faith', especially when it comes to mental health issues;
 - There is often an assumption that disabled people have a 'gung-ho' attitude to risk. However, disabled people have to manage their conditions all the time; responsibility isn't all given over to the employer, which is sometimes the impression that employers give;
 - Disabled people are often not involved in decisions or assessments made about them, and are sometimes pushed into taking greater risks by the need to be seen to be 'the same' as non-disabled employees;
 - There tend to be significant differences of approach within firms, with human resources and equalities professionals being aware of disability issues, but a failure to translate this into effective implementation on the 'front line';
 - Employers tend not to plan for the employment of disabled people, rather they react to individual situations when they arise. Forward planning can overcome a lot of barriers.
- 7.7 It is recognised that change is happening – disabled people were not as visible in society or the workplace even a few years ago. But it has required individual disabled people to fight from within and effect change. Organisations don't seem to have learned from their experiences, and always seem to be going back to square one when it comes to employing disabled people.

Racial Discrimination

- 7.8 The race equality duty for public sector organisations has been in force for several years. Construction firms that tender for public sector work are increasingly being required to address race equality issues as part of the contractual arrangements and this should be impacting on policies and recruitment procedures in parts of the sector.
- 7.9 With this current research, earlier studies and recent projects and initiatives to increase diversity, the construction sector has sufficient evidence and information to begin to effectively address barriers that exist for BME individuals who want to work in the sector and reap the benefits of employing a more diverse workforce.

Age discrimination

- 7.10 A number of challenges have been identified relating to discrimination on the basis of age:
- Older people can sometimes lack confidence in their own abilities and do not challenge the barriers they face. So some may be deselectioning themselves from the construction industry on the assumption that they will not be physically capable;
 - Experience is not always valued sufficiently by employers, especially as it often comes at a financial premium. The use of experienced migrant labour may price older workers out of the market;
 - Pensions are a common cause for concern for employers, which works against the employment of older people;
 - Government employment support initiatives often do not extend to older workers, and training tends to be highly focused on younger people;
 - Older workers can also be affected by incapacity and disability problems, more so than younger workers. This increases the challenges they face in gaining employment.

- Less financial support is available for training adults, particularly if new to the industry.

Gender issues

7.11 While not part of this project, a number of interesting observations were made about tackling discrimination from the lessons learned in gender equality:

- Women from BME communities are believed to be increasingly aspirational in terms of their careers (as reported by the Equal Opportunities Commission in its 'Moving On Up' investigations²⁰), but they still do less well than their white British counterparts. They report being subject to direct and indirect discrimination, such as references to their family obligations, remarks about dress and appearance, and so forth. Employers tend to be polarised – some employ from this group, others do not at all;
- Employers are an 'obvious target' in terms of effecting change but realistically, action will probably come from intermediary bodies, such as sector representatives, chambers of commerce, and public sector bodies;
- The business case for change might be perceived by some employers as being the legal case (i.e. requirement to comply). However, this alone is not a great lever of change;
- Firms are not eager for diversity, preferring instead to recruit in order to reflect the existing workforce. Diversity is seen as 'politically correct'; many employers are unsure about how to speak about it, and therefore avoid it altogether;
- Since 2002, ConstructionSkills have had success in recruiting more women into non-traditional occupations in construction through 'STEP into Construction' – a positive action project that offers support to employers and clients who undertake positive action to increase the number of female entrants into the industry;
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²⁰ <http://www.eoc.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=17693>

ConstructionSkills diversity programme

- 7.12 Diversity is an integral part of the ConstructionSkills Sector Skills Agreement (SSA). ConstructionSkills currently works with the industry and partners to deliver initiatives that support and encourage companies to recruit more women and ethnic minorities, through a variety of local employment and training projects, piloting adult apprenticeships with a female focus and partnering with sustainable communities projects such as the Thames Gateway.
- 7.13 Work is ongoing to challenge the traditional perceptions of the construction industry, to inform young women and people from BME backgrounds, and their influencers about career choices to enable them to make an informed decision. ConstructionSkills' Positive Image campaign has been running since 1998, to increase the number of females starting on construction apprenticeships by a minimum of 10% each year.
- 7.14 In addition, ConstructionSkills promotes diversity through employer engagement through a variety of regionally based projects, for example STEP into Construction which supports positive action²¹ activity within the industry for women and applicants from BME backgrounds; both hugely under represented within the industry.

²¹ Use of positive action criteria through the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act to encourage women and BME applicants to apply for jobs and training in non-traditional construction occupations

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

- 8.1 In this section, we draw out the conclusions from the research undertaken for this project, in particular where these relate to the specific issue of institutional discrimination. These inform the recommendations of the project, which are also set out here.

Policy background

- 8.2 Creating and developing a more inclusive and diverse labour market to provide opportunities for training, participation and employment within all business sectors is a goal for government at regional, national and European levels. This is underpinned by anti-discrimination legislation and the work of the Equality Commissions. New employment directives from the EU have extended anti-discrimination measures to encompass sexual orientation, religious and political belief, and age.
- 8.3 The UK government has responded to these changes with a renewed commitment to equality, strengthening legislation in race, gender and disability and planning for a new commission on equality and human rights. In terms of the construction sector, there is scope to embrace these changes and work towards developing better equality practice to enable under-represented groups to participate in employment and its rewards.

Overview of findings

- 8.4 The findings of the Deconstructing Barriers research project can provide some important messages for policy-makers, employers and stakeholders about the reality of diversity in construction and the exploration of institutional discrimination. The fact that this research was conducted in the North West should not exclude its findings being drawn on nationally, or by other regions.
- 8.5 It is clear that there are a number of issues and barriers which on first examination have been described as 'traditional ways of working' and have remained

unchallenged. However, the UK construction industry employs more than two million people nationwide and has been growing steadily for the last 12 years. Forecasts have indicated that the industry will need to recruit and train some 88,000 entrants a year for the next five years in order to meet the growing demand. Add to this the sometimes negative perceptions that people have of construction as a career choice, and a significant challenge exists for the sector. Moreover, it is certain that current recruitment activities and practices in employment and training will not be able to meet the skill needs of the industry. The extent to which young, white, non-disabled men will represent the bulk of the working age population is receding.

- 8.6 Through previous research and skills data, the industry has indicated that it needs and wants a workforce that better reflects the communities it works in, and that it wants individuals to regard a career in construction as desirable and open to them. Construction companies have said that they want, and recognise the need to encourage a more diverse workforce and for funding and training to be available to recruits who have previously made a choice not to enter into the industry, or who have been discriminated by the industry.
- 8.7 This report has identified a number of institutional barriers that need to be overcome if the skills needs of the sector, its apparent willingness to change, and the needs of specific groups in society are to combine in order to create a more diverse workforce.
- 8.8 The barriers that face individuals in terms of age, disability and race certainly have their differences, and each has its own set of crosscutting themes (such as socio-economic status, gender, religion, faith, culture and heritage). This means that there is a considerable amount of experience to draw on about reality of employment and training in the sector, and identifying what needs to be addressed. It is also clear that many of these barriers have common roots in institutional discrimination, unwitting prejudice and stereotyping that are reinforced by processes and behaviours.

Responsibility and engagement

- 8.9 One of the major challenges of addressing institutional discrimination is to ensure relevant bodies take responsibility for change. The views of employers in this

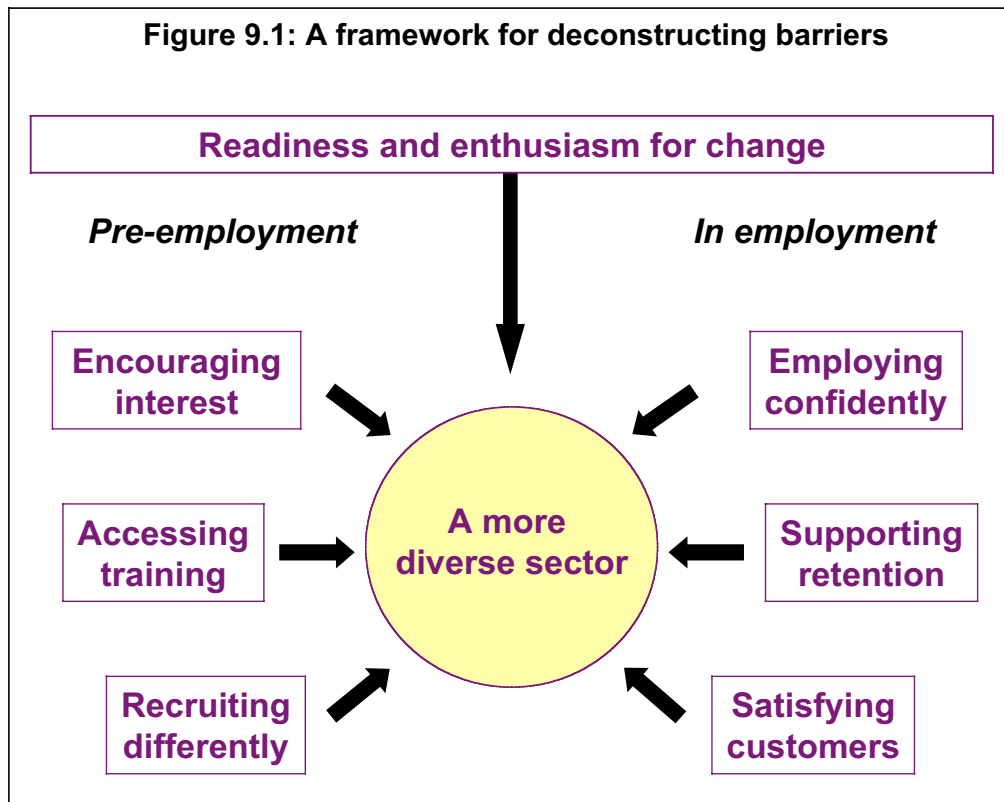
report's survey, for example, highlighted the lack of awareness that their own behaviour had to change, rather than that of prospective employees. More specifically:

- Responsibility lies with a variety of **sector organisations** who have the power, influence and resources to deliver or facilitate change. Support for such change needs to come from employers and cascaded through the supply chain for the effects to be felt throughout all levels of the sector;
- **Public sector organisations** who have statutory duties under current equality legislation need to work in partnership with industry stakeholders to ensure that equality messaging, policy and practice are driven through the supply chain to reach employers large and small;
- **Regeneration and social inclusion strategies** at regional level are currently addressing equality and discrimination, but more action needs to take place. Policy needs to be translated more clearly into practical action at sub-regional level (where demographic differences can be addressed) for the industry to make the changes necessary;
- **Clients and contractors** in construction projects of all sizes have a part to play in ensuring that discrimination within recruitment and training practice - obvious and hidden - is tackled. This should take place as part of an integrated strategy within the sector, and driven by the main players into the supply chain. Consideration is required in terms of how to raise awareness and create the environment for change in the domestic sector, where small and micro-businesses may not be exposed to supply chains and larger projects;
- Employment, training and education opportunities need to be more accessible, transparent and fair to those who may be currently excluded from participation as a result of traditional recruitment and training practices within construction **training providers**;

- **Community-based organisations** working in the fields of disability, race and age can contribute valuable experience and expertise in support of change. They can also help in raising awareness, positive action and support provision. Furthermore, they may also be able to encourage and educate people from minority groups to make an informed choice about entering the construction sector in the first place.

A framework for deconstructing barriers

8.10 In order for the sector to understand the issues around institutional discrimination more easily, a framework has been designed to provide some structure to the conclusions. The framework is based on the assumption that there are a number of readily-identifiable 'pinch points' in the processes of training, recruitment and employment where institutional discrimination is most likely to feature. It also assumes that no single action is going to address the problem – what is required is concerted effort across a number of areas in order to effect change, as well as a willingness to alter existing behaviours. Figure 9.1 provides an overview of the framework, while the succeeding paragraphs look at each element in turn.



Encouraging interest

- 8.11 Some groups in society appear to have negative views or misconceptions about the sector. Certain BME communities, for example, regard the sector as 'dirty' and not providing sufficient professional opportunities. Older workers and disabled people, on the other hand, are put off by the apparent necessity for undertaking heavy manual labour. In practice, the requirement for such labouring has reduced over time, and ignores other elements of the sector where manual labour is not required, for example among the professions.
- 8.12 In addition, trainees have said that they believe the sector receives insufficient exposure and promotion within schools, which restricts interest among young people and increases the reliance on those who have relatives already working in construction. This reinforces the sector's existing workforce profile, rather than helping to diversify it.

Accessing training

- 8.13 Current training delivery tends to focus on the 14-19 age group, where government funding lies. This may be a serious disadvantage to older trainees, with the possible exception of the long-term unemployed where additional support may be forthcoming. There is also a perception that the pressure to fill courses quickly does not afford sufficient opportunity to engage and encourage people from non-traditional backgrounds.
- 8.14 Disabled people and those from BME communities in particular have sometimes struggled to secure work placements and apprenticeships. This is very demotivating for those concerned.

Recruiting differently

- 8.15 Current practices, especially 'word-of-mouth' recruitment, will tend to reinforce the existing workforce profile and make it difficult for people with other backgrounds to find and retain jobs. This is possibly one of the most difficult issues to overcome. Word-of-mouth recruitment is seen as a cheap and effective method of finding and employing workers, but it is a major contributor to institutional discrimination.

Employing confidently

- 8.16 Employers appear to lack confidence when dealing with issues concerning diversity and discrimination. Perceptions of the regulatory requirements, the use of 'politically correct' language, and the fear of potential legal action all appear to contribute to a fear of 'doing the wrong thing'. In this environment, it is judged likely that employers will simply avoid extending their recruitment practices to encompass people from a more diverse background.

Ensuring retention

- 8.17 Individual employees from non-traditional construction backgrounds can feel isolated in the workplace as they are often in a minority. Support structures appear to increase the likelihood of retention and an employee's success in the workplace. Many relatively small and isolated examples exist, from advocacy projects through to mentoring and 'buddying' systems.

Satisfying customers

- 8.18 The customer base of the sector is changing. There is a growing diversity among household consumers, for example in terms of their age and ethnicity. The capacity of firms to reflect this in their customer-facing staff is likely to be a future factor in business success. The public sector's increasing focus on the promotion of equality and diversity will require firms to adapt their recruitment and employment policies.

Readiness and enthusiasm for change

- 8.19 As part of the framework a key overarching element which feeds in to all of the pre-employment and employment aspects is the readiness of the sector, and individual employers, to accept and enact the changes required to deliver a more diverse workforce. At a practical level this could mean reviewing existing systems, policies and practice, such as recruitment, discipline, flexible working arrangements, harassment etc. However, perhaps a more crucial aspect is how organisational cultures and established mindsets are tackled to ensure an accepting workforce and positive work environment. This needs to take place at several layers through training, awareness-raising, strong leadership and the constructive challenging of commonly-held beliefs that can lead to discrimination. Without this keystone, the specific pre-employment and employment elements of the framework cannot be held up.

Stakeholder workshop

- 8.20 Following the primary research phase of this project, a stakeholder workshop was held on 7 November 2006, both to calibrate the emerging findings of the research and to begin to consider actions to address the barriers identified. The workshop comprised a dozen stakeholders from employers, sector bodies and other interested organisations. The headline comments and ideas from the workshop can be found in the message box overleaf, and they have all been considered during the formulation of this report's recommendations. What was perhaps most striking from the discussions at the workshop was the apparent difficulty of identifying specific actions that could actually help to break down the discrimination barriers.

Ideas and comments from the stakeholder workshop

Encouraging Interest

- Publicise the positive message on the employment of older people
- More work required in schools to enhance the image of the sector
- Show that you can get higher education/professional qualifications in the sector
- Sector marketing must address more than gender through new channels
- Can perceptions of the sector from TV be influenced?

Accessing Training

- Need to track retention and progression among disadvantaged trainees
- Improved training and education selection – need for higher quality trainees
- Need to understand better trainees' motivations for entering sector
- Specialised diplomas may have a positive impact when they begin

Recruiting Differently

- Word of mouth recruitment perpetuates the workforce make-up
- What are the motivations of those who choose to avoid the sector or drop out?
- Need to boost applications in the key disadvantaged groups

Employing Confidently

- Sell the principle by concentrating on cost issues, such as reducing staff turnover
- Target action where you're likely to have impact – identify where the leverage is
- Flexible working – explain why it should matter to employers
- Educate firms about diversity terminology

- Use recognised diversity standards to embed good practice
- 'Stock' answers need to be challenged – but hard to shift the traditional mindset

Ensuring Retention

- Tailored initiatives to support certain groups into employment can be successful, but are thought to be too expensive for large scale rollout
- Role models and mentors for new starters from disadvantaged groups

Satisfying Customers

- Diversity KPIs allow firms to 'inherit' the solution from customers

Other influencing factors

8.21 When considering the recommendations of this report, other important influencing factors were identified. We recommend that any specific initiatives based on the report's recommendations should, as far as possible, be:

- **Optimistic:** there is much positive work going on in the sector to tackle discrimination, and it is likely to be counterproductive to begin from a pessimistic viewpoint that the sector is rampantly discriminatory. This is not to deny that problems exist, but a positive approach is likely to be more warmly embraced by the sector, and therefore be more effective;
- **Targeted:** advice, support and action should be targeted for specific groups, be that ethnic minorities, types of firms, or geographical locations. One size will not fit all;
- **Realistic:** there will be some processes and procedures within the construction sector that may not be capable of changing; action should focus only what it is possible to influence;
- **Collaborative:** experience suggests that the most impact can be made where employers, customers and intermediary bodies work in tandem to effect change;
- **Business-focussed:** where possible, businesses should take the lead, and arguments for change should be made primarily on the basis of improving business performance.

8.22 Where possible, we have highlighted examples of good practice from elsewhere (beyond the region, or beyond construction) that can be drawn upon in formulating a response to the recommendations. However, it is clear from wider research²² that ConstructionSkills is already more advanced than many other Sector Skills Councils in promoting the diversity agenda (particularly in terms of gender), so the extent of wider good practice is rather limited.

²² Diversity and the Skills for Business Network – GHK, 2006
<http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file20363.pdf>

Recommendations

Encouraging interest

- 8.23 The business case for broadening the appeal of the construction sector and encouraging more applications across the board is clear, but it needs to be understood better by firms. A variety of employer driven diversity activity has been undertaken in the region, for example the Opening Doors to Diversity Handbook, supported by the NWDA, ConstructionSkills and the Construction SSPA, but more activity needs to be done.

Recommendation One: There is a need for greater promotion of the business benefits of diversity within the construction sector. These include broadening the skills base, promoting a positive public image of the sector, and meeting the needs and requirements of an increasingly diverse customer base.

An overall strategy led by regional public authorities, the Major Contractors Group and members of the SSPA should lead on this.

- 8.24 Increasing diversity is a potentially important way of exploiting the demographic changes within the regional population. The Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for Construction provides the industry with a unique opportunity to address its skills needs. Industry, Government and the Education Sector are all partners in a single overarching strategy to ensure that the right people, with the right skills, are in place at the right time to meet future and current construction demand. The Construction Skills Network, which consists of 12 regional Construction Skills Observatory Groups and a national Observatory Group, was formed to deliver authoritative data and workforce predictions to aid skills planning. In the North West, the Construction Observatory draws on the knowledge and expertise of Government, training providers, construction employers, regional organisations and customers so that future skill needs and investment can be planned. Diversity is a key priority within the SSA and the demographics of the region and potential pool of skills and labour through non-traditional applicants could be further developed and exploited to the benefit of the industry.

Recommendation Two: The Construction Skills Network, North West Construction Skills Observatory and SSPA members should help firms to understand more clearly the demographic shifts that will impact on labour supply in the future, and the case for encouraging the development of a more diverse workforce.

- 8.25 There is widespread recognition that influencing the next generation of construction workers is vital. Schools are unlikely to promote the benefits of working in the sector sufficiently by themselves. Some awareness-raising already takes place in schools, but this has historically focused upon young women and ethnic minorities. For a fully inclusive and diverse workforce, more activity and strategic planning needs to include disability and age issues.

Recommendation Three: ConstructionSkills have already demonstrated the effectiveness of a targeted communications approach in schools with respect to the **Women into Work** programme and the **Construction Ambassadors' Scheme**. There is a strong case for similar targeted activity with schools in areas with high BME populations.

Example: The East London Business Alliance, with CIC-ConstructionSkills, have recently launched the **ConstructionSkills Coaching Programme** aimed at encouraging 13-14 year-olds in Newham (a London borough with a high proportion of BME residents) to take up construction professions. This is linked specifically to the Olympic developments taking place in East London.

Continued partnership working with Connexions and other Information and Advice Group (IAG) organisations to promote careers in construction to BME communities and young people with a disability needs to be undertaken. Awareness raising activity should not be solely focused upon gender and ethnicity in isolation. More work could be done to engage with younger people within disability communities to ensure that they can make an informed choice in their own career destinies, with the right support and career guidance offered to the majority.

- 8.26 The research for this report indicates that there are a number of common perceptions and misconceptions of the construction sector that could be addressed through its marketing and promotional support material, including the use of positive images of disability in construction.

Recommendation Four: Literature to promote the construction sector should ensure that the sector's image is better-presented as a career option for disabled people, BME communities, and a range of age groups. This could be done by presentation of positive images of under represented groups in a variety of construction occupations to persuade and influence the reader that work within the sector for non-traditional entrants is possible and achievable. More awareness about the diversity agenda and how marketing and communications literature plays a part in encouraging diverse applicants into the workplace could take place - sector agencies and organisations could raise awareness with their own Departments as a starting point. This would ensure that diversity is a priority in marketing and communication strategy.

8.27 More generally, there is a case for a greater number of targeted activities to engage specific communities and groups. The Sustainable Training for Sustainable Communities (STfSC) by the Housing Forum, Constructing Excellence and ConstructionSkills has identified good practice since its inception in 2003. Client-led projects within the programme have demonstrated that it is crucial to undertake a partnership approach with local specialist and community agencies in order to recruit under represented groups into the industry. Their experience and expertise can give support and direction to both clients and potential entrants from minority groups into the industry.

Recommendation Five: Client-led projects should encourage the sector to promote itself more widely within specific communities and groups through recruitment drives and engagement activities sub-regionally, using approaches such as:

- targeting groups by holding recruitment days within the community and locations that they may visit, e.g. disability and community centres and local projects;
- using role models within the sector to encourage disabled people, BME groups and older workers with transferable skills to consider a career in construction (at all levels, not just trade and craft);
- offering presentations in educational establishments that target groups may attend.

Accessing training

- 8.28 Funding can be a major barrier to accessing training for disadvantaged groups. Older trainees lose out substantially because of the focus on the 16-19 agenda, while reduced financial support for language classes and evening courses impacts on disabled people and ethnic minorities, among others. Many funding decisions lay beyond the remit of regional partners and individual learning delivery bodies. However, there is capacity for the sector to lobby decision-makers in order to encourage wider participation in construction training.

Recommendation Six: ConstructionSkills should seek to influence the financing of construction training in order to ensure that older people, people with a disability, and people from BME communities are able to access training opportunities within the sector.

- 8.29 Colleges in the region that run construction courses acknowledge that there is more that they could be doing to promote a more diverse intake, but the impetus is limited by the current high levels of applications for courses. However, there are some specific examples of Colleges working in partnership with regional organisations to provide access to training courses for under represented groups. Bolton College and MANCAT, Manchester, are two regional examples of equality driven activity using Positive Action measures under Equality legislation.

Recommendation Seven: Construction education and training bodies should be encouraged to share best practice about improving the diversity of their intake and work in partnership with other organisations with the same agenda, to enable a more diverse applicant base.

- 8.30 Information on the career destinations of trainees appears to be limited. It is important to understand the extent to which individuals from key groups leave the industry, and why. High leaving rates may be linked to the problems some groups appear to have with securing apprenticeship placements as part of their training.

Recommendation Eight: ConstructionSkills, the LSC and education and training providers could consider how to improve the monitoring of retention rates within the sector, the career destinations of trainees, and success in securing work placements. This information needs to be available in terms of age, ethnicity and disability.

Recruiting differently

- 8.31 Current recruitment methods such as informal chats, traditional networking opportunities through the usual channels of family, friends and acquaintances and unstructured advertising can contribute to, and support the appointment of, 'likes'. They offer few opportunities to non-traditional applicants who may wish to enter the industry.

Recommendation Nine: Employers and stakeholders can help to tackle recruitment barriers by widening the net beyond traditional sources of labour supply. Greater effort and action to reach the communities identified in this report, to engage them through a variety of methods could be undertaken. This could include the targeted use of radio or more specialised press outlets (for example radio adverts in different languages for different sub regions, or magazines with a disabled readership). Community-based organisations can help in this process. Skills and employment bodies with their own diversity strategies and priorities should consider proactive initiatives that help employers to change their recruitment practices.

Recommendation Ten: The construction sector needs to become better at monitoring the age, ethnic and disability status of its employees. A baseline of these factors would allow the sector to monitor its progress towards delivering a more diverse workforce. Sector organisations could obtain this information through employer engagement activity that may already take place. A recording and monitoring process to capture this information could be developed for a baseline to be established. (For example, existing CITB-ConstructionSkills Levy/Grant administration activity)

Recommendation Eleven: Employers need to examine their selection criteria and recruitment processes to identify current procedures or practices which may hinder the progress of potential applicants on the basis of their age, ethnicity or disability. This might include selection criteria and interviewing technique, where content may be outdated, irrelevant to the requirements of the job or too narrow and thus discriminatory.

Community based organisations in disability, race and age can contribute valuable experience here, and more widely. The industry needs to work in partnership with such groups to fully realise the changes needed to make a more diverse sector responsive to community and sector needs.

Employing confidently

Responses to diversity training in the workforce vary, but on balance they appear to be received positively. The capacity for smaller companies to undertake this training by themselves is very limited, and they will need additional support. The targeting of such training is also important. It is front-line managers and site foremen who most need such training. They are in the best position to monitor and moderate behaviour in the workplace, and are often instrumental in on-the-spot recruitment decisions.

Recommendation Twelve: Support agencies, in conjunction with Federations, Unions and the SSPA could work together to produce comprehensive education and training resources in age, race and disability. This would assist employers in understanding the meaning of discrimination, diversity and legal frameworks, and encourage action towards change through better understanding.

Existing activities in the North West:

The **Centre for Construction Innovation (CCI)** at the University of Salford works with SMEs in a wide range of business areas, and it receives a number of enquiries from firms about equality and diversity issues. There is scope for ConstructionSkills and other SSPA members, with CCI, to consider ways in which the Centre's access to SMEs might be developed to improve the dissemination of diversity information, or even training.

A **housing association** in the North West provides internal equality and diversity training to its own staff, but also includes contractors. This is an interesting example of how public sector clients might be able to include contractors in their own training programmes.

- 8.32 Certain recurrent issues were identified throughout the course of the research, including an apparent widespread fear among employers of all things deemed 'politically correct'. Some employers appeared reluctant to recruit outside of their traditional base, whether through fear of resentment among current workers, avoiding perceived legal or cost implications, or thinking that in doing so they were 'protecting' people from harassment and bullying. This is evidenced, for example, by employers who tended to be reactive in disability issues. Firms need to be more proactive in dealing with disability, and provide a working environment that encourages disclosure and accommodation of disabilities. There is evidence of some work in this area, for example Constructing Excellence Respect for People Toolkit, which includes a module on equality and diversity. This helps construction companies identify equality in the workplace issues that need to be addressed and provides links to agencies and information that can help in responding to these challenges within the construction and built environment. There is further evidence of sub-regional projects that provide resources in equality for teachers, learning

providers and employers in construction that challenge outdated concepts of gender and ethnic stereotypes in construction occupations. More activity and resource provision in disability and age issues needs to take place. They need to be readily accessible and widely disseminated to sector employers for awareness raising to take place.

Recommendation Thirteen: Employers need to become more proactive and confident when it comes to addressing diversity. Support agencies need to find a way in which to provide information to the employers and engage them on diversity issues in an atmosphere that encourages their cooperation and ties in with construction procurement agendas as a way forward. One angle of increasing importance to firms is corporate social responsibility. Initiatives like the Considerate Constructors' Scheme help firms to demonstrate that they take their wider responsibilities seriously.

ConstructionSkills and its partners could consider working in partnership with this scheme to include a diversity element into its Code of Practice. The Scheme has recently strengthened the disability element of the Code and is focusing on the future direction of the scheme in 2007. There is an opportunity here to influence the Code. It would provide a useful way of trying to ensure compliance and commitment on diversity and equality at the site level, through the Scheme's regular inspections.

- 8.33 Employers need to be able to source up-to-date and non-technical information regarding diversity in the workplace. There is also a specific lack of awareness about the new age discrimination legislation. Whilst evidence suggests that awareness of the new public sector duty on disability discrimination is also likely to be low.

Recommendation Fourteen: There is an urgent need for Government agencies and employer representative bodies to raise awareness among construction firms about the new age discrimination legislation and the public sector duty on disability, especially among smaller companies. This needs to be done through a partnership approach. There is scope for ConstructionSkills to work in partnership with such agencies (for example ACAS) to develop this further through employer engagement. Existing work and resources that are already being used to promote diversity in construction in the region will need updating to include recent equality employment legislation.

Ensuring retention

- 8.34 Employers have an important role to play in tackling discrimination and ensuring that employees and their peers from under represented groups have an opportunity to realise their full potential once they are in the workplace. This responsibility is wider than management teams.

Recommendation Fifteen: All employees in construction companies need to be made aware of equality and diversity responsibilities at induction stage. This induction could tie in with and support, new or existing policies and procedures in Equal Opportunities and diversity within the workplace.

- 8.35 Research findings suggest that some employees from under represented groups gained benefit from support networks within the workplace and on site. Support practices such as coaching and mentoring also appeared to help in the crucial early days of employment. There is also evidence within the region that some construction companies are already doing this. Bramall Construction has found success in ensuring the retention of women in the early stages of employment through pairing, buddying and mentoring practices on site. This approach could also work in terms of older workers and people with a disability in the early stages of employment.

Recommendation Sixteen: Employers should consider how to adopt and encourage the use of mentoring programmes, buddying systems and pairing work placements to help minority applicants in the first stages of recruitment and within new roles.

Satisfying customers

- 8.36 Some public sector clients have demonstrated the ability to exert real influence on recruitment in construction. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to large-scale contracts are encouraging recruitment from under represented groups in local areas, although there is little evidence that this good practice is filtering through to private sector contracts. However, KPIs and other targets need to be used carefully if they are to encourage good practice

Recommendation Seventeen: The diversity agenda needs to be an integral part of all public sector-led construction projects and initiatives. There are already a number of examples where workforce diversity in construction firms has been delivered through contractual means, such as Elevate East Lancashire. However, there is greater scope for such exercises to be adopted by the region's public sector clients. The experience of some sector bodies suggests that parts of the public sector require education on how to incorporate contractual clauses in equality and diversity with success.

- 8.37 It is important that any approach considers the need to engage small firms and small traders – often the supply chain for large public sector projects, and therefore not always directly affected by the same diversity requirements.
- 8.38 SSPA partners should seek to identify an appropriate forum that would allow best practice in public sector contracting to be disseminated to the region's public bodies. Such a forum would benefit from meeting on a regular basis to review practice and ensure where possible that contractual diversity obligations are being enforced.

Readiness and enthusiasm for change

- 8.39 The regional construction sector now needs to address the barriers and issues identified in this report. Partners have already demonstrated their readiness and enthusiasm to action and change through the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), the Regional Equality and Diversity Strategy and within the Regional Statement of Skills Priorities. However, there is scope for more practical action to be delivered by these commitments. As the promotion of equality and diversity is often a crosscutting theme in strategies, this should enable an integrated approach to

addressing the barriers identified.

Recommendation Eighteen: Equality and diversity strategies need practical action at sub-regional level, for the industry to make the changes necessary. Clients and contractors all have a role to play to ensure that discrimination, obvious and hidden, is tackled with commitment and energy. This should take place as part of an integrated strategy within the sector, and driven by the main players into the supply chain. Promotion of activities generated by regional strategies should be widely disseminated to ensure that good practice can be adopted at a local level by clients, employers and support agencies.

8.40 The recommendations within the report identify a number of ways in which the sector can identify and drive the changes forward, both within the SSA and within each of the organisations own strategies for addressing diversity and equality. In developing these recommendations, we have engaged the members of the Construction Sector Skills and Productivity Alliance (SSPA). The SSPA was established in 2003 and is designed to ensure that the varying priorities of the construction sector's regional partners are aligned. The North West Sector Skills for Productivity Alliance (SSPA) is driven by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and brings together a wide range of strategic partners that include:

- ConstructionSkills
- Regional Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
- NWDA
- SummitSkills
- Business Link
- JobCentrePlus
- Centre for Construction Innovation (CCI) in the North West
- North West Universities Association (NWUA)

- Asset Skills
 - North West Regional Intelligence Unit (NWRIU)
- 8.41 Drawing on this broad base of local knowledge and expertise, the SSPA has provided the focal point for the development of the regional Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for Construction.
- 8.42 The construction SSA in the North West addresses the key skills challenges revealed through in-depth research and industry consultation.
- 8.43 Collaboratively, between construction employers, training providers and Government partners the SSA is designed to deliver the right type of training, in the right format for employers and their employees to improve the industry's performance and productivity.
- 8.44 At the heart of the SSA is an increased employer commitment to training and skills, and priority measures in diversity and equality feature within the plan for the region.
- 8.45 The SSPA members have each been engaged regarding the findings of the report and discussion regarding the way forward has taken place.
- The engagement of the SSPA was important for three reasons. First, to ensure that the direction of the report's recommendations aligned to the SSPA's future priorities. Second, to explore further the recommendations and flesh out some ideas for action (such as the involvement of CCI and Business Link in helping small firms address equality and diversity issues). Thirdly, to build commitment and enthusiasm for the research's findings that can be carried forward with sector employers in the future.
- 8.46 This final reason for SSPA engagement – building a commitment for future action – is perhaps the most important. Employers have a vital role to play in addressing the barriers identified in this report, as well as industry federations, unions and public sector bodies. However, the engagement of the SSPA provides a regional strategic forum to oversee the delivery of change.

Recommendation Nineteen: All members within the SSPA should ensure that all issues regarding ethnicity, disability and age are included into their relevant diversity strategies and promoted actively through their activities:

- The Regional Economic Strategy provides scope for major developments in equality and diversity, but these need to be driven by the main sector partners for any concrete action to take place;
- The three Sector Skills Councils - ConstructionSkills , SummitSkills and Asset Skills - need to work towards a fully inclusive diversity strategy for 2007 and beyond which fully acknowledges ethnicity, disability and age issues. These must also be reflected in an appropriate Adult Learning Strategy;
- The regional LSC, through its Equal projects and funding, has considerable scope for industry-specific action in partnership with others. More activity needs to take place to help learning providers improve diversity standards and their approach to engaging target groups;
- Higher and Further Education providers are already governed by statutory duties in equality but more work needs to be undertaken in establishing a joined-up approach to applicants from target groups with respect to work placements and educational opportunities.

Widening the activity

8.47 In a number of areas, this report makes recommendations that are not necessarily unique to the construction sector, nor to the North West. Diversity and equality issues in many cases cut across industry sectors. For this reason, as a **concluding recommendation**, we suggest that ConstructionSkills and other partners, particularly those within the built environment, look to identify projects and activities that might be suitable for a wider audience. This could leverage greater resources and engage other stakeholders at regional or national level, while still satisfying the needs of the North West construction sector. For example, the North West Regional Skills Partnership's Statement of Skills Priorities has an underpinning requirement to ensure all activity addresses issues of equality and diversity.

ANNEX A – STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

Sharon Brown	ConstructionSkills
Debbie Hatton	ConstructionSkills
Lee Bryer	ConstructionSkills
Jill Coyne, Sue Harrison	ACAS
Duncan Aspin	Birse Civils
Bill Sargeant	Bramall Construction
Fiona McGregor	North West Universities Association
Ken Humphreys	Cruden Group
Linda Harper	Diversity Action
Dr Andrew Platten	Elevate East Lancashire
Val Michej	5050Vision
Professor Marcus Ormerod	SURFACE, University of Salford
Vicki Austin	NWDA

ANNEX B – LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

5050 Vision	Durkan Construction
ACAS	Elevate
Accrington & Rossendale College	Equal Opportunities Commission
Age Concern/PRIME	FaithRegen
Birse Civils	Federation of Master Builders
Blackpool College	Golden Gates Housing, Warrington
Bolton at home	Greenspace
Bolton College/ACE	Junction 21
Bramall/Keepmoat	Learning and Skills Council
Breakthrough UK	MANCAT
British Gas	New East Manchester
Centre for Diversity	North West Development Agency
ConstructionSkills	Rochdale Housing Initiative
CIC-ConstructionSkills	Salford University (SURFACE)
Constructing Excellence/Centre for Construction Innovation	Skills Solutions, Manchester
Commission for Racial Equality	UCATT
Cruden Construction	Wai Yin
Diversity Action	Wates
Disability Rights Commission	Youthbuild

ANNEX C – LIST OF USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND LINKS

National bodies	
Disability Rights Commission	http://www.drc-gb.org/
Equal Opportunities Commission	http://www.eoc.org.uk/
Commission for Racial Equality	http://www.cre.gov.uk/
Commission for Equality and Human Rights	http://www.cehr.org.uk/
ConstructionSkills	http://www.constructionskills.net
Constructing Excellence/Centre for Construction Innovation	http://www.constructingexcellence.org.uk/
Federation of Master Builders	http://www.fmb.org.uk/
CIC-ConstructionSkills	http://www.cic.org.uk/home/index.shtml
Faith Regen Foundation	http://www.faithregenuk.org/frf.html
Age Concern	http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/
UCATT	http://www.ucatt.org.uk/
Regional bodies	
5050Vision – the Northwest Forum on Ageing	http://www.5050vision.com/
Breakthrough UK – employment advocacy for disabled people	http://www.breakthrough-uk.com/
Diversity Action	http://www.diversityaction.co.uk/
Legislation and regulations	
The Disability Discrimination Act	http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/YourRights/YourRightsArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4001068&chk=eazXEG
DTI – advice on discrimination for businesses	http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/discrimination/index.html
Liberty – advice on anti-discrimination rights	http://www.yourrights.org.uk/your-rights/chapters/the-right-not-to-be-discriminated-against/index.shtml



CITB-ConstructionSkills, CIC and CITB(NI) are working in partnership as the Sector Skills Council for Construction
(CITB-ConstructionSkills Registered Charity Number 264289)
Part of the Skills for Business network of 25 employer-led Sector Skills Councils
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