

WE CAN WORK IT OUT:

COMMUNITY RESEARCH REPORT



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INTRODUCTION



ABOUT "WE CAN WORK IT OUT"

We Can Work it Out is a 3 year project designed to work with people from BAME families in Cardiff to design, develop and deliver services, activities and solutions that begin to break down barriers, promote opportunities and improve the quality of life for BAME working families struggling to get by.

The project is run in partnership with four organisations; SRCDC, Women Connect First, Oasis and Horn Development Agency and is grounded in the belief that people with lived experience of a situation are often best placed to come up with the most effective solutions. We believe that only through a co-ordinated, joined up approach can we begin to unpack the complex issues that face BAME families struggling to get by.

The project is made up of two phases, the first is a peer-led research process and the second is a two year activity phase in response to the research results. This report will outline the key findings from the research phase and outline how we came to decide on the focus areas for our initial pilots. A follow up report looking at the impact of these pilots and subsequent activities over the remaining two years of the project will be available in 2021.

If you would like to be involved in any of the activities over the next two years, if you have an idea that you believe can tackle some of the underlying issues affecting BAME working families, if you want to take part in an activity as a participant or if you want to stay updated on our project then please contact Sarahway@srcdc.org.uk

WHY DID WE DO RESEARCH?

Families in Cardiff are facing many challenges. These challenges are complex and often dependent on different facilities, services and opportunities available in local areas so we know that in order to develop effective activities we need to make sure that we understand the different needs of families in our communities and also the skills, experiences and ideas that they have. We believe that involving local families right from the initial phase of project design we can improve the chances of creating meaningful, impact-ful and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of the BAME families in Cardiff.

People in the project group undertook training to become Community Researchers, led by the New Economics Foundation and each spoke with a few key people from their communities and asked questions that focused on families' ideas and experiences.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY RESEARCH?

Community Research is about people from the community conducting research into issues that interest them in their area. Local people are experts in the process and help to design and deliver the research. They develop a range of questions that enable them to gather information through having conversations with other local people that could be their family, friends, colleagues, neighbours etc. The community researchers also then take part in the analysis of the research, identifying issues and ideas from the research and in this case then going on to develop practical solutions.

Community research aims to understand people's feelings, experiences and judgements about their lives. It is not about uncovering one singular and unchanging 'truth'. It is about enabling people to make sense of their own lives and circumstances and build power and control through knowledge.

WHAT HAPPENED?

2019

JUL

In the second week of July 2019, the Core Group of the We Can Work it Out project met twice with facilitators from NEF. In the two workshops, the members of the Core Group worked with the facilitators to design a piece of community research together. The aims of the workshops were for the Core Group – as community researchers – to co-design a research plan which the community researchers would carry out over the summer.

Over the course of the two workshops, the community researchers discussed issues in Cardiff which impacted upon their ability to make ends meet. Based on this discussion, they identified important areas that they wanted to talk to the wider community about. These included how people found local services, childcare, experiences of discrimination, and workplace issues. They then designed a series of questions based on these themes which they would ask members of their communities.

AUG

The aim of the interviews was to see whether the issues discussed in the workshops were widely felt in their communities, and to begin conversations identifying shared concerns within those communities and ways to make things better.

SEPT

Over the next three months, the community researchers went into their communities and carried out between one and three interviews each, capturing the information in a small handbook. In total, there were nearly 80 interviews carried out

OCT

In early October 2019, the community researchers took part in a workshop to discuss the content of their interviews and – together with the facilitators – analyse the content of the interviews they had conducted within their communities over the previous months.



RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section describes the three main areas that were identified from the interviews as having the most effect on their family life.

WORK

CHILDCARE

SERVICES

LOW WAGES

Nearly every person who the community researchers spoke to said they are earning wages which were too low. They feel that real wages have reduced over the past few years as the cost of living has increased and taxes are felt more acutely. As a result, there are many people who are struggling to make ends meet.

'There are many challenges. The first is the amount of money paid to the employee which is minimal. Second -time off and holidays due are not given in my case. The council taxes simply too much, the old rates were better. There are so many bills that just build up. Making ends' meet is difficult at the best of times.'

In addition to struggling to afford basic necessities, low wages mean that people who took part in the research feel more and more that they have to fit their lives around work, for example through increasing the number of hours they work so that they can make ends meet. This means parents for example have less and less time to spend with their children.

'Increasing taxes and reducing the size of the income of the worker...is not enough to meet his needs and the needs of his family. This leads to increased working hours to provide maximum income and this affects the presence between his family and children significantly in most families here'.

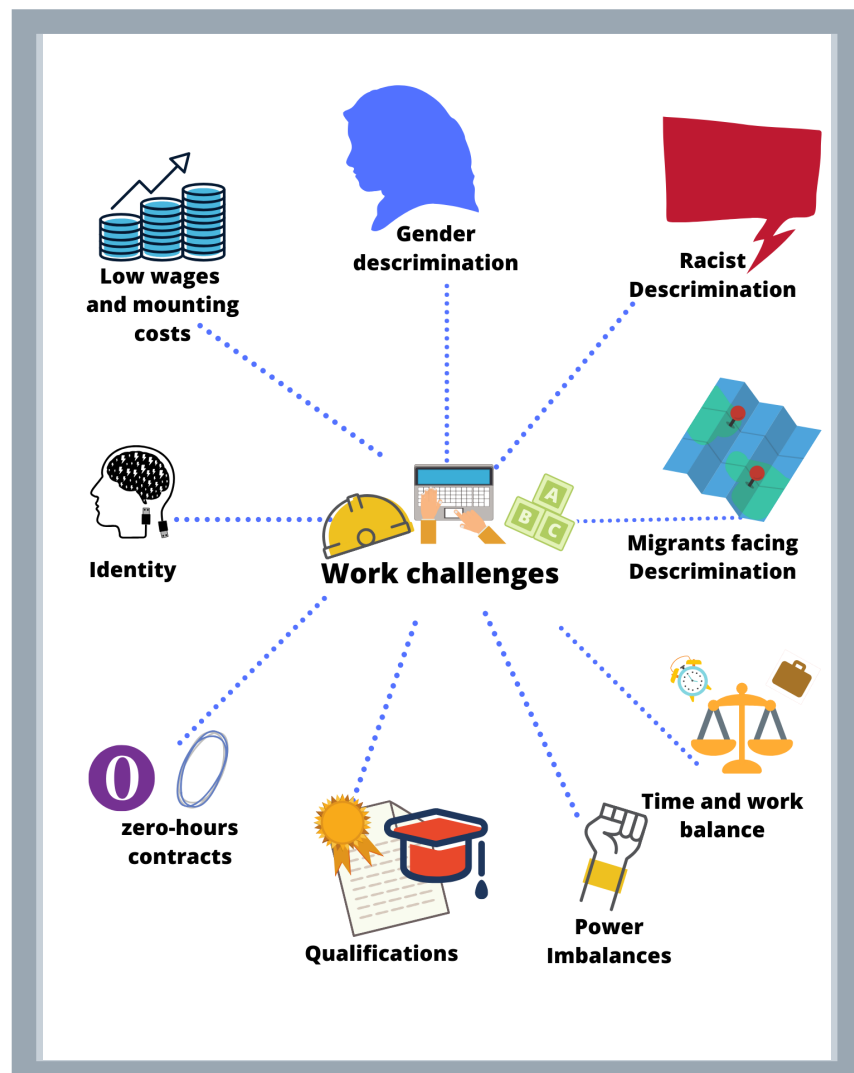
'Parents can't always afford things from receiving benefits, and it is hard keeping the kids looked after. Both parents are having to work because of expenses. Decent wages for everybody and get rid of zero-hour contracts.'

RACISM

The community researchers spoke to people about their experiences of discrimination in relation to work. The vast majority of the people they spoke to said they experience racist discrimination in the workplace which effects their mental health, as well as their pay and conditions. Some people said that they had even been forced to leave jobs because of the discrimination they faced at work.

'I myself no longer work. I used to work for a caring agency, however discrimination made me quit. I was told to pay for uniform when the agency was supposed to provide the uniform for free. Upon asking other employees if they paid for the uniform, they said they got theirs for free.'

People identified racist discrimination as an exploitation of people who do not know their rights because they come from another country.



They feel this lack of knowledge is exploited by employers who treat people unfairly, particularly people from the BAME community and from other countries.

'Maybe the main factor is the lack of sufficient awareness of workers knowing their rights at work and how to apply them, especially in relation to the existence of racism by managers of labour and their assistants.'

'BME communities are often unpaid, exploited by employers, mainly because they do not know their rights and what is "unfair treatment" and this is a big problem for a person from the BME community.'

'I have been stressed, angry, put down, and weak because of miserable failings work the impact of discrimination in the workplace. Yes – there is unfair treatment of BME workers who are manipulated because of their lack of knowledge of working law and their rights. There is also a difference in terms of salary.'

Within the analysis session, the community researchers discussed how discrimination also means that people are unfairly turned down when they apply for jobs. Many job advertisements specify the Welsh language as a specific requirement, which many people think is unfair and locks them out of work.

'The issues around employment and pay for Welsh speaking only will affect my fair job opportunity and pay. By selecting the welsh race and the welsh language.'

GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Women who were interviewed feel that they are paid less than men because of their gender. Additionally, there are some women who said that the rise in the retirement age is a policy which discriminates against women in the area.

'There is discrimination everywhere. Men are paid more than women. There is unfairness because of your age and gender.'

'Gender discrimination is ridiculous and I feel penalised for it. The retirement policy and the law changing for the age has affected my sister who has to work until 66 and can't claim benefits due to the increase in age change. Women's pensions were less than. Can't claim benefits due to the increase in pension age. Women's pensions were less than men as they were on low pay anyway. You work longer and are still paying into the system when you should've benefited years before.'

'The matter of discrimination goes to the heart of the community because the status of people who have overstayed their leave date from the country are taken advantage of because they are unable to report to the authority for fear of being found out and deported. It is a sad state of affairs when you have when you have to look to someone else to look after you. The immigration policy needs to be reviewed and it should be made fair for people who are in the most need; hope is all they have.'

'The power in the workplace for employers or owners exploit migrant workers who work on the black market due to their illegal status in terms of salary and long working time.'

MIGRANTS FACING DISCRIMINATION

A large number of people who took part in the research and in the communities of the community researchers are migrants. A lot of the people that were interviewed discussed the discrimination which migrants face in Cardiff because of their immigration status. People whose visas have run out and who do not have leave-to-remain are targeted and exploited by employers.

Employers know that workers without a valid visa have no recourse to legal action, and therefore exploit those workers through lower pay, longer hours and worse conditions. People that were interviewed said they think this is incredibly unfair, and blame the immigration system which enables exploitative employers.

People who took part in the research feel that there are power imbalances in the workplace which have an impact on them. They feel that bosses and managers hold the majority of power in the workplace – more so than the rest of the staff in the workplace. It is felt that this power is often exploited, for example through the exploitation of people from BME backgrounds.

'When I used to work at the caring agency, the managers definitely had the most power in the workplace. Power can be used to control all the workers, having the most authority in the workplace. Power may also be misused through indirect discrimination...I believe that employers may take advantage of people from BME communities through making them work more and getting paid less'.

'I think the upstairs has the power in the workplace. Upstairs means the office where the boss, manager, and co-ordinators stay from 9am – 5pm. They control the office and all the staff, so we need to follow and listen to them. They are powerful.'



TIME AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Nearly every person the community researchers spoke to said that they have very little control of their time which has a negative effect on their work-life balance. For many people in Cardiff, this means that they have little time to rest and recuperate. This has a further negative impact on their mental health.

'I find it hard to balance work and home life and feel as though I can't rest physically and mentally, feeling under pressure all of the time. Coming home, getting prepared for the next day and home chores are never ending – I don't have the energy to even do it.'

A lot of people the community researchers spoke to said that the work available to them does not suit families and people with children.

This is because those with childcare responsibilities have to be available to look after their children, cook, and pick them up from school at certain times during the week. Trying to force childcare around working times is causing a lot of distress parents in Cardiff.

'The challenges of being in work and having a family in Cardiff when the woman likes to work that so difficulty to reconcile her work with the care of children, and nurseries are very expensive and perhaps as well as the working hours of women do not suit them to take care of their children and family.'

'My husband is unable to take us out because he constantly must go to work. We cannot be in contact with my husband when he is at work...By offering higher rates of pay, my husband will be fine to cut off a couple of hours off of work to spend time with his family.'

WORK

ZERO-HOUR CONTRACTS

Zero-hour contracts are a type of contract between an employer and a worker, where the employer is not obliged to provide any minimum working hours. In Cardiff, the community researchers found that there are large number of people who have no choice but to work in a job which has zero-contract hours. Every person who is on a zero-hour contracts speaks in very negative terms about them. The total lack of security and the irregular hours of zero-hour contracts is throwing the lives of Cardiff residents into disarray.

'Zero-hour contracts are very scary. If I work I get money, if I get no work I can't get money. I am not sure when I can work and when I can't which makes my family life very hard.'

'The problem has been that I've got a zero-hour contract since I'm self-employed...It is very hard to increase the hours since I don't have extra hours being a single parent and self-employed getting my needs met. Income is reduced and I have to live accordingly with my pay.'

IDENTITY

Nearly every person interviewed has a deep frustration with the failure of waged work to meet their needs as an individual, as a parent, or as a family. There is a general feeling that people are forced to adapt their lives to a broken model of work, rather than having a model of work which suits them and their needs. One interviewee goes further, and expressing a feeling that waged work forces people to be seen only as someone who is 'productive for society', therefore restricting their ability to live the life they want to.

'Work as a way to define you as a person who is productive for society. One of the first questions people ask you when they meet you is: "Do you work and what do you do?".'

QUALIFICATIONS

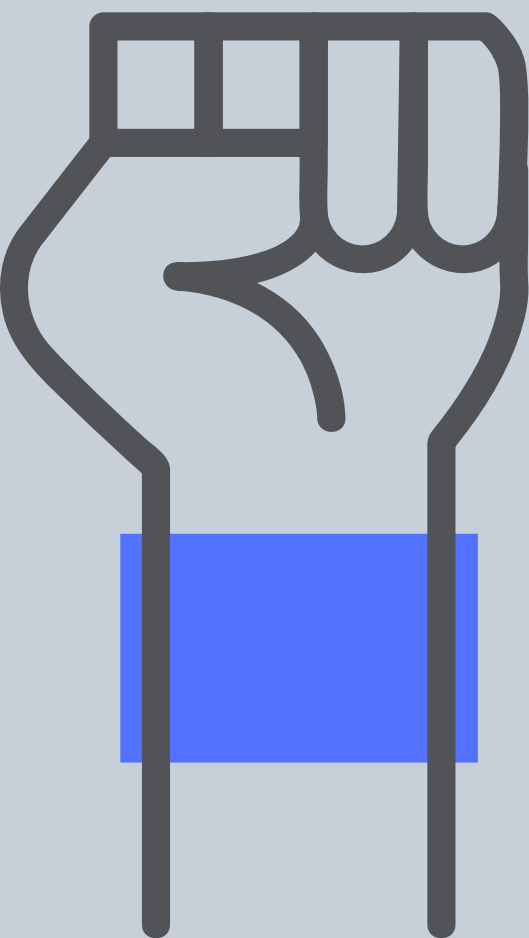
Over the course of the analysis, the community researchers spoke at length about the issues that people have in their communities in regards to overseas qualifications not being recognised in the UK. This means that there a large number of people with skills and qualifications that are not recognised, and therefore not put to good use in the workplaces in Cardiff. This means that people can get 'stuck' working in jobs they are not necessarily suited for.

'My husband...is qualified in sewing in Bangladesh. He is unable to carry this qualification from another country, so he is stuck working at the restaurant.'



SOLUTIONS

In the Analysis workshop, the community researchers had many suggestions for general adjustments that would make a big impact to their quality of work life.



WORK

'I think giving more opportunities to BME communities in decision making will empower them to overcome those challenges.'

'NO language restrictions for employment or education access such as compulsory welsh language.!'

'Create a service which puts employers in contact with people with different languages'

'I would like to have flexible hours to do work. Also the same hours every week; no more changes.'

'Working hours should be decreased and hours made suitable for working mums. To not be made to feel that part time jobs are not important, and also to be given a secure job.'

SOLUTIONS

The community researchers also began to discuss a series of short term and long terms solutions they could begin to take action on now. These included:

SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS

Advice for people to let them know what they are qualified for and what is available.

Anonymised names on job application forms to prevent discrimination

Need for support for people over 30 interested in setting up own business (e.g. princes trust for older people).

Sharing existing knowledge within the community (for example of work culture; what you're qualified for; what training is available; what employment choice exists; what benefits are available; and what worker rights you are protected by.)

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

Raise minimum wage to at least a Real Living Wage.

Base wages on experience and with incremental increases.

Apply Living Hours to all jobs. Living Hours include:

Decent notice periods for shifts: of at least 4 weeks' notice, with guaranteed payment if shifts are cancelled within this notice period.

A right to a contract with living hours: the right to a contract that reflects accurate hours worked, and a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours a week (unless the worker requests otherwise)

Ban zero-hour contracts.

Ensure that Universal Credit is synchronised with the needs of those with work and housing requirements (16 hours +).

CHILDCARE

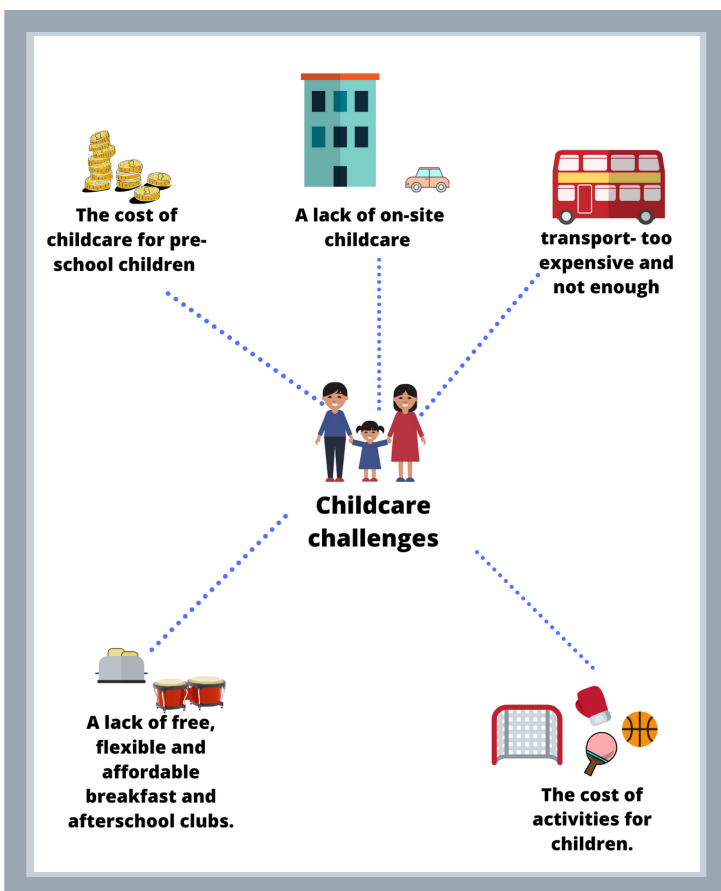
COST

The sheer cost of childcare for families is viewed as an often unmanageable burden. Families in need of childcare discussed how they do not go to work because the cost of childcare outweighs their own pay – meaning that they have to reduce their own hours in order to stay at home and look after their children. There are parents who do not feel at all supported by the local authority in regards to childcare provision. This often seemed linked to austerity and local authority cuts.

'Childcare costs are so high that one parent in the family has had to reduce hours drastically to stay at home. Working full time isn't worth it, as most of one person's family goes towards childcare.'

'I think working parents in Cardiff are not supported because they have to pay for someone to look after their children when at work. The local government needs to support the needs. I think breakfast clubs help the parents.'

'Childcare provision isn't as good as it should be, because of the cuts in funding for most childcare and it takes a long waiting time to get access to Families First.'



A LACK OF ON-SITE CHILDCARE

There were quite a few people who had concerns about the lack of on-site childcare at workplaces and public institutions. The most common issue was the lack of a crèche at ESOL classes. This meant that parents who want to attend the classes are not able to do so. As we have seen above, this makes worse the issues that many people in Cardiff face in regards to language barriers.

'I can't go to any ESOL classes, so I can't get a job. I am looking for ESOL classes with crèche but there is a problem because there is no childcare available where they refer me to ESOL classes.'

CHILDCARE

TRANSPORT

In the process of talking to people and analysing their interviews, the community researchers came to the conclusion that – in Cardiff – the problems of childcare cannot be separated from issues of transport. Like childcare, transport in Cardiff is far too expensive, inconsistent, and unsuited to the lives of working parents. The buses in particular have high fares and were described as incredibly unreliable – so much so that it is impossible to build a suitable daily routine of work and childcare around.

'Public transport is not good either. The fares are too much and for a few pounds more you can go by taxi. The timetable of public buses is terrible – they never seem to be on time. You can wait a long time for a bus and it will not come on time, then the next thing you know there are four coming at the same time!'

The irregular buses pose an additional issue for parents learning English at ESOL classes which are often far away from their home. People find it very hard to attend their classes on time (which can be penalised) because the system of public transportation is so poor.

'With the bus it is really hard and I worry the whole journey if I'll be on time. If I was invited to take a course for the ESOL, which was in Cardiff Bay and I have a kid in the school I need to bring my daughter to the school and then go to the ESOL class. Also the problem with the ESOL classes is that they start at 9:15am and my daughter must be in school by 9:00am – so how am I supposed to be there by taking two buses and be at Cardiff Bay for my classes by 9:15am?!'

BEFORE AND-AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS

The community researchers found that there is a strong feeling in their communities that the coverage of affordable before-and-after school clubs in Cardiff is inadequate. The availability of breakfast clubs, or after-school clubs (or both) varies from school to school – in either their availability, their capacity, or their cost.

'To support the needs of families, the local government can perhaps assist in paying for costs such as childcare and other educational expenses. Areas such as play centres are hardly used, these places need raising awareness of as they are free facilities that nobody is using. Schools need to promote the opening of more afterschool clubs in school. This helps the students as well as the parents as they have more time to do other things that may be more important to them. School should have more places available for breakfast club, as I cannot place my children in it now as it is apparently full.'

There is a frustration amongst working parents that the availability of childcare and before-and-after school clubs is dependent on a post-code lottery' – a system which is felt to be deeply unfair and unfit for purpose.

'My daughter did not go to Flying Start so I could not go to work. Flying Start is a postcode lottery. Because I live in Grangetown my daughter did not go to Flying Start in Riverside.'
'Not every school has an after-school or breakfast club, so it is not good. Also for some schools you have to pay.'

CHILDCARE

AGE RANGE

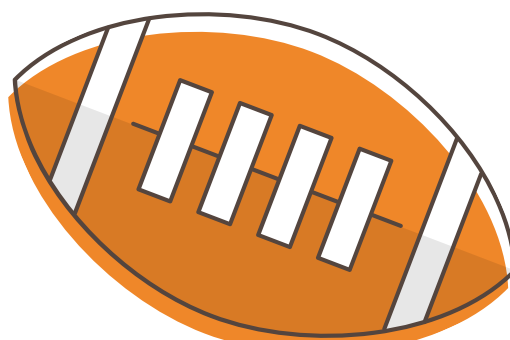
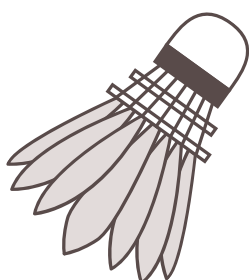
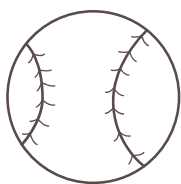
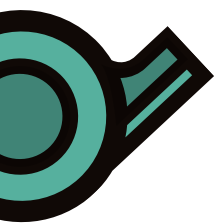
The community researchers said there is a frustration in the community that there is no available childcare for children beyond the age of five. This becomes a major problem during the school holidays in working families who might not be able to take time off work to look after their children.

'There appears to be no childcare for the ages 5 to 15 years. School-aged children who in the holidays have their parents working either have to stay with grandparents or family, or if they do not have that option they have to find paid childcare. There is no free childcare available and these families struggle to make ends meet. There seems to be more funding for nursery-aged children but not for five years onwards.'

EXPENSIVE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

The community researchers said that one of the major expenses for a parent can be the outlay on activities for their children. There is a strong feeling that the activities that are available for their children are too expensive, and that the total amount of money spent on activities per child puts serious pressure on house finances. Parents also feel that it is essential that their children take part in the activities which are available in Cardiff – both for fundamental educational and social purposes.

'I do not feel families in Cardiff who have children have enough support. In school there is not enough support. £5 you have to pay for football club or £20 per piano. If I want to take my children to the swimming pool I have to pay. ...the cost of money and time for the families is high and even if you do all these things you are still not a good mother...I buy the uniform with my money. I paid baseball for my children £35 per session. All the money I have in my job I am spending on activities.'



CHILDCARE

SOLUTIONS

More so than any other issue, those who took part in the research were very forthcoming with solutions to the issues around childcare. The single most common demand is for universally available free childcare, the vast majority of which should be provided by the state and funded through taxes.

Others want large businesses to guarantee on-site crèches for workers, which would enable parents to work without either paying extortionate childcare fees, or go out of their way dropping off and picking up their children from private childcare.

'There is limited childcare provision in my opinion. Before and after-school childcare should be provided for single and working parents.'

'For both kids and young adults, youth clubs could be available, things could be free to attend, where they can do sports and activities for free. More access to free childcare, whether it is after school or breakfast club also free school meals whether they choose or not so they are fed. Breakfast and after noon meals – use tax money for these things instead of other things.'

'The big companies should have a work crèche where there is a nursery childcare at the same building would save a lot of time and stress.'

Much like childcare, people who took part in the research think that public transport should be free and the service drastically improved. There are parents in Cardiff who think that their lives and the lives of their children will be made much easier were reliable, and free public transport available. In addition, one person thinks that there should be a bespoke school bus service to take children to and from school which would enable the parents to get to work on time themselves.

'I think that public transport should be free for everyone, especially children. My children walk to school, and therefore have to wake up very early. If the school bus were free, she might have gotten more sleep and have gotten to school safe and sound.'

'A bus service to take children to and from nursery would be great. Would save the time parents take before work to drop the kids off.'

CHILDCARE



'The local government could fund breakfast and after school clubs for families as many have to pay and they cannot really afford to do so. Only Welsh schools seem to have funded clubs and this is very unfair as parents have a choice of which school to send their children to.'

'I don't think families with children are supported in Wales...The least that can be offered is:


- 1) FREE meals to all children regardless of parents income*
- 2) FREE school uniform or no restricted clothing.'*

SOLUTIONS



In the analysis workshop the community researchers began to suggest some solutions they could begin to take action on immediately. These included:

Establishing a community run breakfast club with a rota system for parents. It would be pay-what-you-can or low-cost. It could make use of available school spaces and would be aimed at supporting working parents. It should be linked to English classes for parents nearby or in adjacent rooms. This would help to address transportation and childcare issues associated with ESOL Classes. Childcare for younger and older children should be in the same area.



Convincing existing school clubs to do activities for children, for example arts and crafts.

Convincing the government to open-up Flying Start and to ensure that the availability of childcare is no longer a postcode lottery.



SERVICES

GP BOOKINGS

Cuts to local GP services have led to major difficulties for families. It is difficult or impossible to book appointments at a specific time in some GPs, whilst others have very long waiting times and when they do get an appointment their concerns are often not taken seriously. This makes life very difficult especially for working parents who are having to live and work with extended illnesses, or who have to take unpaid time off work to spend in queues at GP services.

'The GP service in Cardiff is very poor as waiting times are very long and access to appointments and doctors is extremely difficult. However, I understand that this is ultimately due to low funding from the NHS but it has impacted myself and my family negatively as we find ourselves being ignored by GPs and our illnesses not investigated properly due to not wanting to waste the limited funds they have.'

'For GPs they never give an appointment that suits me and my children as I am a single mum.'

'Just to get an appointment sometimes you have to wait 3-4 weeks. Some services are over-subscribed. So many services do not have enough resources.'

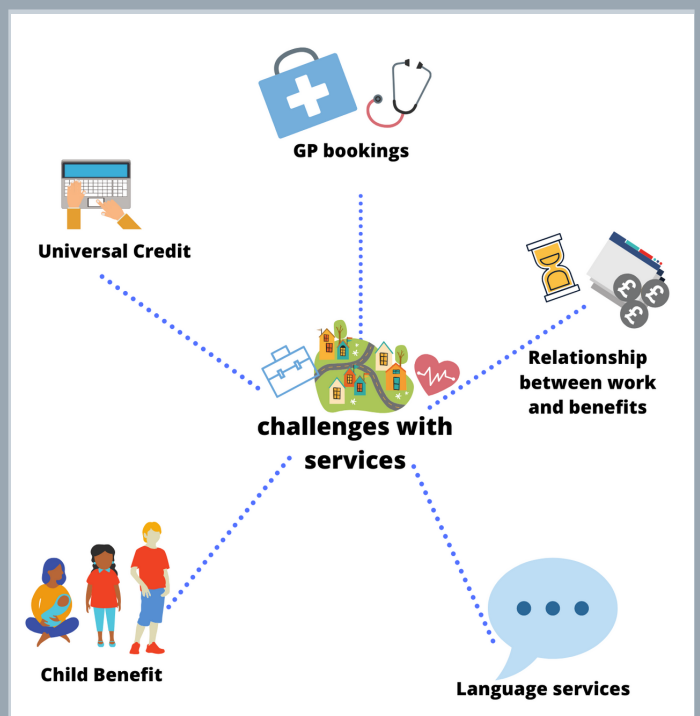
UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Problems with Universal Credit were identified by the community researchers as one of the most important issues effecting people in their communities.

Universal Credit is a monthly payment to help with living costs and began to roll out in Wales in 2017. It is a single lump payment which has replaced Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Working Tax Credit.

There are many in Cardiff who have very strong feelings towards the failures of Universal Credit, not least because it is not enough to even cover the basic necessities for families – especially in a context where basic living expenses are getting more and more expensive.

'Universal Credit is the worst government decision which made it impossible for my family and children to meet the basic survival needs such as food expenses and bills. Especially with the increase in everyday life such as electricity, water, gas, transport, and rent.'



SERVICES

Those interviewed raised a range of issues with Universal Credit, including the experience of applying for it as a very complicated process; the lack of appropriate translation services; the lack of a physical space to go to for help; and a frustrating online system of checks. These issues have led to a lot of misery, and the lack of payment for weeks at a time have thrown people's lives into chaos because of the impact on people's budgets.

'Universal Credit is appalling; the online application and the checks are awful. I have no knowledge and have to ask neighbours to check for me. It is frustrating and makes me angry. The impact is drastic: I had no money for eight weeks and have had to borrow, and it is still not sorted. We need offices which deal with Universal Credit, as well as translators'.

'I went to the Hub to help me, but it was not helpful. They wanted me to go and do it online, but I did not have much English to do it. I was struggling to fill in the form online and my application was late. They did not consider my late application and did not pay me.'

'Universal Credit is very complicated for most people. It is making confusion for people's budget'.

BROKEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND BENEFITS

The community researchers also found that there is a broken relationship between their work and the system of benefits people rely on when they are out of work. In particular, residents in receipt of Universal Credit found that there it doesn't pay to work and people remain on benefits because wages were too low and the cost of going to work was too high.

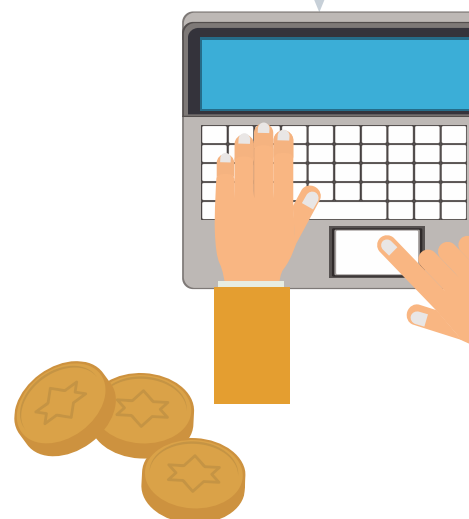
'My husband is working full time and it seems more costs and expenditure than when we were on benefits. The system says that we should not be on benefits and work but when we do it is unfair by not giving us any allowances and we pay out even more so it is much harder on working families.'

'The system is not empowering people to really want to work, then have aspirations and careers.'

'Universal Credit is very bad because if I work they cut my money and my benefits, which makes things hard to manage with my expenses. I feel I can't manage with my children and work. It is very hard.'

This problem is made worse by the way Universal Credit is calculated. Recipients feel that it punishes individuals who are only able to find part-time or inconsistent work from their employers.

'There is no consistency in work. In Universal Credit, they want to see consistent hours but the employer doesn't offer this, which effects your income and your quality time with your family. All this also effects your productivity and ability to carry on working. The work and benefit system creates dependency rather than creating opportunities to grow.'



SERVICES

There is a strong feeling that the Universal Credit system needs to be overhauled. One person suggested bringing back Working Family Tax Credit and establishing a system of benefits which actually encourages people into work.

'Introduce back Working Family Tax Credit again to encourage parents to go back to work instead of discouraging them by not providing them with a financial and emotional support which is making them choose to stay at home and be a housewife/husband as they will be worse-off financially and physically if they work.'

CHILD BENEFIT

In 2018, the government introduced a “two-child policy” to child benefits, which means that households claiming child tax credit or universal credit, who have a third or subsequent child born after 6 April 2017 are unable to claim additional child benefit. This has had an impact on families in Cardiff who are struggling to get by because of those cuts.

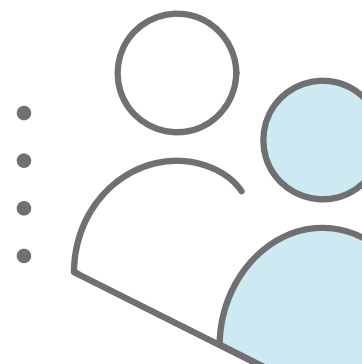
'Child benefits are unfair as the law is that families that have more than two children will not receive child benefits or tax credits.'

LANGUAGE

The vast majority of people in the communities of the researchers do not have English as a first language, and there is a wide variance in the ability to speak and understand English language. Speaking and understanding English to a good level is often an essential element in getting work; but also whilst at work, not being able to speak English to a high standard can result in discrimination and exploitation. Finally, the inability for people to speak or understand English means that a range of other essential services are often inaccessible to them.

Good, reliable and accessible language services are therefore essential to large sections of the Cardiff population. However, there is a clear perception from these communities that the services currently available are inadequate. One example is the complete lack of interpretation services for individuals who are trying to access other essential services – including GPs and Universal Credit.

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SERVICES

'There are people without English as a first language who can't access everything they need because of language barriers. For example when families are sent off with forms which they can't understand when it is written down.'

'The children end up translating for their parents when they shouldn't need at that age.'

'There is a lack of interpreting services. I don't know everything that is available to me in terms of services that are available to me in terms of the services that are accessible.'

'Language is very important to access any service. People with language barriers or who are ethnic minorities are especially effected and sometimes they don't bother to ask for their rights as they are facing difficulties. The cost to them from paying for ESOL classes, transport to centres, and taking time off is significant.'

'Since the government hosts many nations, it's a matter if increasing the numbers at ESOL classes for BME communities.'

'I personally think that the government should make these ESOL classes more accessible by making them local, free and raising awareness of them.'

'We need more English classes in different areas to make it more accessible for the women that need them. If there is travel involved that excludes women who do not go out much and may not be willing to travel as well as those who are immobile and don't drive, or might not be confident with public transport. One idea would be to set up a class at school premises so that when these women drop off their children to school, they have childcare covered and they can immediately enter a room to take class.'

SOLUTIONS

People the community researchers spoke to were very forthcoming in their solutions to the inadequate language services in Cardiff.

Once again there was a strong feeling that local authorities should play a large role in providing ESOL classes free of charge. In addition, people feel that there should be more classes available, and that they should be in places which are accessible and convenient to the people that use them. One suggestion is that ESOL classes could take place in schools, so that parents can drop off their children and not have to worry about childcare.

In the analysis workshop, the community researchers also queried the assumption that the onus should be purely on non-English speakers when using services. They also said that there should be attempts made to ensure that staff working in those services are able to speak their first languages too.

An attempt should be made to ensure that staff working in public services are suited to the needs of the local population, for example by being able to speak languages reflective of the local population.

The solutions put forward by the people interviewed tended to focus on what the local authority should be doing; in the analysis workshop the community researchers also began to discuss what they could begin to do immediately to address these issues. The community researchers also discussed what they could do with some of the existing skills they already had, as well as what assets they had access to.

The solutions included:

English language classes at the mosque which has empty spaces in the day and is very low cost. The classes could be at the same time as young people's Quran lessons in the evening.

Convince the local college to run low cost English language degree courses

Push for longer hours for community run English courses

Parents taking it in turns to look after children whilst others go to English classes. Some professional childcare support would be needed and it would have to be low cost.

Establish an English language café or a coffee morning in one of the locally available community centres.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of research and analysis, the community researchers produced a detailed summary of the issues they face and have begun to form a series of solutions in response to those issues which they have begun to organise around. The community researchers decided to focus their efforts on three major themes:

WORK

(which included issues as diverse as low wages and zero hour contracts, racism and sexism, work-life balance, and lack of workplace power)

CHILDCARE

(which included unaffordable costs and unsuitable availability, lack of appropriate transport, and a lack of on-site childcare throughout Cardiff).

SERVICES

(including a failing system of universal credit, a lack of appropriate language services, and GP waiting times).

There is a strong feeling that much of the services which are unaffordable and inaccessible should be made free, and that the council should have a major role in providing these services like free and accessible childcare, as well as a free and reliable bus service. Those who took part in the research also feel that certain national laws around minimum wages,

zero-hour contracts, and guaranteed shifts should be changed so that working families do not struggle in the way they currently are.

Those involved in the research also feel that there are a number of assets within the community which can immediately be drawn upon in order to begin to deal with the challenges identified. These assets include the skills, relationships, knowledge, and community buildings they have identified in their neighbourhoods.

The community researchers have already identified ways in which they could build upon their assets, for example by establishing a language café, sharing childcare responsibilities, and pooling shared knowledge about rights at work and the benefits system.

This report represents a first step towards organisation and action as the community researchers begin to actively address the issues they face, and challenge the system of work, childcare, and local services and to transform it into something which better suits the needs of the people of Cardiff.

What are the issues for our working families?

STORIES COMING OUT OF THE INTERVIEWS

FREE, FLEXIBLE CHILDCARE



"Childcare is inaccessible for some people because of the language barrier and the cost of the services."

"It is important to find cheaper and free-(childcare options, for people that have) ambitions such as (me), studying in College to get qualifications to work with people who have disabilities"

"I feel mothers in the Riverside area are struggling because of no mother and toddlers group and lack of creche facilities."

THE SYSTEM CREATES DEPENDENCY

"There is no consistency in work. With Universal Credit they want to see consistent hours but employers don't offer this which effects your income and your quality time with you family. All this effects your productivity and ability to carry on working. The work and benefits system creates dependency rather than opportunity to grow from it."



COMMUNITY DIVISION



"I'd like to see more youth provision and community choices that bring people together."

"Integration is more important that cultural standards."

"(We need) better integration in community projects."

"I've seen a lot of change in the community, I resent the inability to build resilience, for the community to be cohesive."

HOUSING SYSTEM FAILURE

"I have been on the (housing) waiting list for eight years, I live in a small flat with 5 kids."

"I think the housing services are very bad because they don't treat people equally which is unfair for other people."



NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER GROWTH



"They overwork us, no opportunities, lack of support"

"Low paid jobs do not allow access to better opportunities."

"No real opportunities to improve myself. Organisations have Open Days as token gesture, no true job opportuniities."

LANGUAGE AND ACCESSING SERVICES

"As a new person to the country there was no guidance. Language plays an important role in accessing services. there is no facility in the offices or Hubs to guide people who have English as a Second Language."



NO FAMILY TIME



"Work can help me bring in another income to help provide for my family. Work can also not meet the needs of my family at times due to the hours put in and hours away from my family."

"Many people in our mosque work long hours to make ends meet- young people don't have family values, youth in particular suffer"

"Too Tired for family"

"You don't have much time to spend with family."

MORE YOUTH PROVISION

"Youth Services could be available, things could be free to attend, where they can do sports activities for free and not paid."

"(I) believe that more activities after school time are necessary because children can choose bad friends or influence when they have no leisure time activities and they will spend more time in video games."



AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS



"" There is no after school clubs and some families who are working need help after school."

" (We need) more classes after school for children and to support parents who are working."

"They are many issues for example, a lack of family friendly places, activities for children, After schools clubs."

WHOLE FAMILY SUPPORT

"" Too many community services not joint up to help family."

" I do not think there is enough support for the complete family."

"(I do) not agree on how the Social Services in Cardiff are working and supporting families with different backgrounds."



MOUNTING FINANCIAL COSTS



"Sometimes we need support for paying for schools trips, uniforms... paying for Arabic school and swimming classes."

" Paying for leisure facilities like swimming and football (is hard.)"

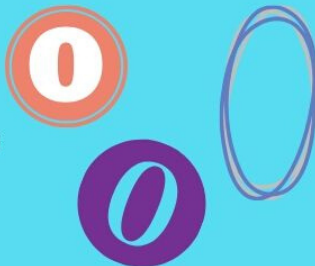
"Firs tthere is council tax, the electricity bills, gas bills, phone bill. mobile bill, food bill, the car..the challenges are HUGE"

ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS

"People with zero hours contracts have no power and most of the time they are exploited."

"People with zero hour contracts need to be protected as if they lose their job the family end up in crisis."

"if people are working zero hours, they have no power to influence what goes on in the work place."



PUBLIC TRANSPORT ISSUES



"Cardiff buses are always late and expensive as well. In my opinion, transport should be free for students."

"(Public transport) is very expensive because when I need to take more than one stop the cost of bus travel increases considerably."



PARENT A

'To support the needs of families, the local government can perhaps assist in paying for costs such as childcare and other educational expenses. Areas such as play centres are hardly used, these places need raising awareness of as they are free facilities that nobody is using. Schools need to promote the opening of more afterschool clubs in school. This helps the students as well as the parents as they have more time to do other things that may be more important to them. School should have more places available for breakfast club, as I cannot place my children in it now as it is apparently full.'

PARENT B

"With the bus it is really hard and I worry the whole journey if I'll be on time. If I was invited to take a course for the ESOL, which was in Cardiff Bay and I have a kid in the school I need to bring my daughter to the school and then go to the ESOL class. Also the problem with the ESOL classes is that they start at 9:15am and my daughter must be in school by 9:00am - so how am I supposed to be there by taking two buses and be at Cardiff Bay for my classes by 9:15am?!"



PARENT C

"Public transport is not good either. The fares are too much and for a few pounds more you can go by taxi. The timetable of public buses is terrible - they never seem to be on time. You can wait a long time for a bus and it will not come on time, then the next thing you know there are four coming at the same time!"

PARENT D

'For both kids and young adults, youth clubs could be available, things could be free to attend, where they can do sports and activities for free. More access to free childcare, whether it is after school or breakfast club also free school meals whether they choose or not so they are fed. Breakfast and after noon meals - use tax money for these things instead of other things.'

PARENT E

'The big companies should have a work crèche where there is a nursery childcare at the same building would save a lot of time and stress.'



CASE STUDIES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

A few examples of stories you captured from local families exploring cost of living alongside education costs

PARENT B

Parent A's main concern as for his young son- it is thought he is autistic but the NHS aren't willing to diagnose him yet. if they did, it would give him access to more support, financially and emotionally. Their main issue with work/family balance was the cost of everything utilities,rent, food etc. and how he cannot see a way to every being able to afford a 3 bedroom house- he has a son and daughter who would benefit from their own room



PARENT D

To be honest, my life was really miserable moving from one place to other (for each ESOL course), could you imagine I have to put my daughter in full-time (childcare) or I wouldn't make it. In the beginning I couldn't take much courses far from Pentwyn because I have 3 years gap between my eldest and younger one. When the eldest was in full- time school, I could start to move but (creche for my youngest) was only 2 hours. (Getting to and from) nursery was chaotic, buses without spaces... There is a gap between every course in every place. Sometimes was a big gap because depend on creche and the type of bus I needed to take.

PARENT A

Parent A saw a need in the community for "free play schemes" for BME community and she applied to the council many years ago and received funding to set it up..last year the funding ran out and the scheme had to discontinue. She feels its very difficult now to get funding for such playschemes which are very much needed in our community. Another (scheme which is very much needed) is a childcare provision that includes wellbeing for mothers. A scheme which would involved 2/3 hours of free chidlcare whilst the mothers can take a class to gian skills and experience like sewing and cooking and working on their wellbeing.



PARENT C

It is quite a lot of money that I have to pay for my children to go to school like bags, shoes, school uniform or any other materials, because my husband is the only one working and we cannot cover everything including council tax, water bills, food. We need more money to buy everything for our children. We spend more and earning less. I normally go to Salvation Army and I pay for my children to play for 2 hour £1 or £2 per child. So, If I want to go three days in a week, I have 3 children I need £12 for my kids to play



CASE STUDIES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

A few examples of stories you captured from local families exploring how the workplace impacts their lives

PARENT B

"we have both the same employer but in different sections. I'm so grateful they've been so supportive. They allowed me to take longer maternity leave when my child was born, have less working days and flexible hours. They have a scheme for our childcare costs to be lower. Family supportive scheme, just in case to take my child if needed. My work meets our needs. Our work is a charity organisation, third sector."



PARENT D

As a member of the BAME community, I have felt a lack of trust and disrespect whilst the co-workers (British) are treated differently. This had not happened to me alone, I have seen other BAME workers that felt they weren't treated as they should be and therefore left their roles. Furthermore, (there is) a lack of recognition. (Employers) place an experienced (overseas) individual in very bottom of salary range comparable to non-experienced British workers. It's a serious discrimination.

PARENT A

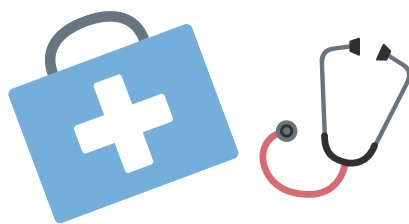
Stressed, angry, put down, weak....miserable feelings are the impact of discrimination in the workplace. Yes, there is unfair treatment for the BAME workers and they manipulate the lack of knowledge of employment law and their rights. Also, in terms of salary there is a difference.



PARENT C

I have experienced indirect discrimination before many times. There is nothing I can do about this unfortunately. I've received no support from the local government regarding such issue. I myself no longer work. I used to work for a caring agency, however discrimination made me quit. I was told to pay for the uniform when the uniform was supposed to be provided by the agency for free. Upon asking other employees if they paid for their uniform, they said they got theirs for free. My husband does work at a restaurant. The pay rates are quite low, but again, language barriers lead to limitation where he can work. This is why he has decided to stick to his job regardless of the low wage.





GP bookings



Universal Credit



**Relationship
between work
and benefits**



**challenges with
services**



Child Benefit



Language services