

3 Methodology: how we approached this research

The study lasted just over three months in all, with a further month for writing and checking the findings, the researchers all working on a part-time or limited basis throughout. The total expenditure (about £12,000) to produce this report was actually very modest in relation to the annual budget of the policy or research section of a medium-sized local authority, for example. There is therefore no reason why it could not be replicated elsewhere. Although the stages set out below appear to have a chronological sequence, in fact, by the end of the study, they were all being carried out in parallel as we identified new information, new organisations and new contacts. One of the key qualities, which the fieldwork researchers had in considerable degree, was the flexibility to follow new leads and to respond to new demands as the work developed.

The study started by reviewing existing *policy documents and research* documenting the numbers of and policy towards minority ethnic groups in York and North Yorkshire, located through correspondence, internet searches, searches of local libraries and newspaper archives, and the academic and policy literature, at local, sub-regional and regional levels. This revealed a very limited array of material but was incidentally useful in introducing the study to the major agencies in the city.

Official national statistical datasets were then revisited: as noted, the 2001 Census is the only large-scale dataset of use for all minority ethnic groups, although by the time of the study it was substantially dated. Other datasets such as the LFS were discarded as being of no use. Two particular but new sets of data were examined: the statistics on National Insurance numbers (NINOs) of migrant workers, and data related to registrations by migrant workers in the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) (a monitoring and regulation scheme introduced since the 2004 EU accession of eight Central and East European countries). Data on NINOs has of course been generally available for some time but

the combination of NINOs (which gives a person's place of residence) and WRS (which gives their place of work) has been the means, despite their limitations,¹ by which local authorities have been able best to monitor the activities of migrant workers in their areas (see Adamson *et al.*, 2008, and Chapter 4 of this report for a detailed explanation of how these data can be used).

We next turned to sourcing *administrative data*. This, as researchers have argued for some years, has been a poorly used but potentially very valuable source of data in relation to identifying and mapping those in poverty (Alcock and Craig, 2000), and the same argument applies in relation to mapping local populations by ethnicity. The richest source of data here is the annual return by ethnicity of pupils that each school in each local authority area must submit to the Department for Communities, Schools and Families. While it is clear from examining some of these returns from other local authorities that there may be a high level of 'refusals' (which may be parents unwilling to respond to the question or teachers unprepared to pursue the question for one reason or another), the overall picture can be extremely informative, particularly as some minority ethnic groups – such as Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin people – have younger populations and higher fertility rates than the national UK average.² Their presence in a local population, particularly if relatively small, is likely to be more noticeable by tracking school populations.³

We then turned to examine the administrative records of major employers in the city. *Public bodies* covered by the terms of the RRAA 2000⁴ are required to institute ethnic monitoring arrangements. All of the large public bodies located in the city were able to provide us with some data showing the ethnic origin of their workforce.⁵ In the case of educational establishments, we were also able to obtain a profile by ethnicity of the student body and in a few cases, of private sector organisations supplying services to these public bodies. Most

organisations seemed both able and prepared in a transparent fashion to provide the data requested; some pointed out (perhaps prompted by this enquiry) that their data was not adequately collected or stored and that work was in hand to improve it. Some preferred to characterise our enquiry as conducted under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (although we had not specified that it was); in instances where organisations might be reluctant for whatever reason to provide data freely, it is presumably open to researchers to use this mechanism to obtain the data. Only one public body failed to provide data despite several requests over several months by the end of this study, and here we did use Freedom of Information legislation. In this case, we had asked the local police force for details of the ethnic origin of those seeking asylum who were required, by virtue of their status, to report to a local police station. Our request was forwarded via the headquarters of the North Yorkshire Police Force, then via the Home Office, to the UK Border Agency which then failed to provide any data. In the case of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) office in the city, less than five members of its staff of 388 were recorded as members of minority ethnic groups and because of the small number involved, specific minority ethnic groups were not identified.

The public sector bodies in York from which data was gathered were as follows:^{6, 7}

- Askham Bryan College (a land-based higher education establishment)
- Defra
- North Yorkshire County Council (staff outposted in York for, for example, cleaning and catering)
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council
- North Yorkshire Police Force
- Royal Mail

- UK Border Agency (reporting refugees at York Police Station)
- University of York
- NHS North Yorkshire and York (formerly York and North Yorkshire Primary Care Trust)
- City of York Council (including a separate analysis for York schools)
- York College (a sixth form and further education establishment)
- York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (covering York District Hospital and other smaller establishments)
- York St John University

The story with *private sector* establishments was very different. At the prompting of the local office of the Department for Work and Pensions, we assembled a list of all employment agencies based in the city (65 in all). Our intention was, from responses to the questions in our letter, to identify agencies which had more contact with minority ethnic or migrant workers and to follow up the letter with a short interview exploring the number and diversity of workers they had placed. In the event, only one of the employment agencies answered our letter. We also wrote to 66 further private sector companies with workforces of 100 or more: we had 25 responses to this letter, in nine of which we were informed (via the Royal Mail) that the company had 'gone away'. Of the remaining 16, one (a financial sector organisation) provided data drawn from a national database, and six provided some very limited data. The remaining nine, including prominent local employers such as a large supermarket (300–1,000 employees) and a building company (3,000–5,000 employees), did not give any information or said they were unable to do so as they had no system for recording ethnicity. One healthcare provider told us that 'I cannot see any benefit to us or how providing such information can benefit the York community'. Those not answering the letter included other major local employers

(each with 1,000–3,000 employees), and three supermarkets (each with 300–1,000 employees).

One worrying outcome of this reluctance to provide information is that some of the private sector organisations, without any legislative requirement to do so, clearly do not appear to take the issue of racial equality seriously. Another is that some of the private sector agencies contract services to public sector agencies. It is arguable that the latter are failing in their statutory duty to promote 'race' equality if they do not apply the same criteria of 'race' equality, including the maintenance of adequate ethnic monitoring systems, to those organisations from which they buy goods and services, often at substantial cost to the public purse. The other concerning aspect of this picture is that a considerable volume of research both in relation to more settled minority ethnic groups and more recent migrants has shown that while many minority ethnic workers often find it easier to access work in the private sector, by the same token this work is often more likely to be such that workers are more highly exploited, with poor conditions, low wage levels (often well below the minimum wage) and inadequate health and safety provision (see e.g. Craig *et al.*, 2007b; TUC, 2008). We return to this issue later on in Chapter 6.

The next stage of the study was to identify and contact *voluntary sector organisations*⁸ that had a focus on working with minority ethnic groups. Because York has historically had a very small minority ethnic population, investment in this kind of activity has been very limited. The City of York Council's major investment in this area, strictly from a public sector organisational base but working to some degree with more of a third sector ethos, was the organisation Future Prospects, also supported by training providers such as the Learning and Skills Council. For some years this has provided a city centre single gateway focusing on employment and training services for those wishing to enter the labour market. By its very nature, it is now significantly involved with minority ethnic groups, with which it started work in 2000. Although some of this business was with long-settled minority ethnic groups, for example women from South Asia who had little grasp of the English language, more

recently it had had a relatively substantial volume of users from the East and Central European migrant worker population, to the point where it had eventually appointed a Polish national on to its staff. In 2001 about 7% of its work was with minority ethnic groups (excluding White Other) with a further 1% of White Other clients. By 2007, about 11% was from minority ethnic groups (excluding White Other), with a further 11% from White Other groups, meaning that 22% of its total workload was for BME groups (with almost a tripling of its workload in six years). The issues faced by minority ethnic groups needing support for securing employment include language and communication problems (such as literacy and a lack of translation support), immigration advice, exploitation from local employers and bullying and intimidation from housing providers and consequent risk of homelessness.

York Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), the third sector umbrella organisation characteristic of most areas in the UK, had been instrumental in setting up the original Community Relations Council in York in the 1980s. This folded in the late 1980s, to be replaced, some years later, by YREN (see Chapter 2). York CVS retained contact with some key minority ethnic 'leaders'⁹ and was able to signpost us to them. Because of its key position in the third sector, it also continued to have demands made of it from time to time by individuals from newly arrived minority ethnic groups and from policy agencies. In late 2007 it had convened a conference, on behalf of the Inclusive York Forum, on the needs of BME groups in the city but, despite a commitment then from the City of York Council that its findings would be taken forward, the general view from respondents was that little had happened in the intervening period.

YREN is the only Black-led organisation in the city but recently lost part of its core funding when the Commission for Equality and Human Rights replaced the national Commission for Racial Equality. As a result, with only one full-time staff member supported by part-time administrative help and the work of volunteers, it is able to undertake little work other than casework (through interviews and a telephone line) and representing the interests

of BME groups at a range of partnership bodies in the city. Although YREN has a Black-led board of trustees, most of these are on the board as individuals and not as representatives of community organisations.

Refugee Action York (RAY) was established in 2006 as a result of the increasing incidence of issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum in the city. Initially a campaigning group run from a committed individual's house, it had attracted City of York Council funding to employ a part-time development worker and was beginning to achieve a higher profile, particularly through campaigns to prevent the deportation of specific refugees seeking asylum (see e.g. *York Evening Press*, 13 August 2009). Much of its work had focused on the needs of Kurdish and Turkish refugees, and they gave us some access to these communities. A relatively new organisation, YUMI (York Unifying and Multicultural Initiative) works with people from BME communities, linking, mentoring and empowering them through a range of intercultural community activities. YUMI is a voluntary network with a service level agreement and key partner status with the Council. Through its projects and events, it had identified people from a wide range of ethnic origins present in York.

Finally, York now houses two mosques. These are obviously oriented to the needs of the Muslim population in the city although there appears to be little to differentiate the two mosques (the Bull Lane Mosque and the Fourth Avenue Mosque) other than their size (the Bull Lane Mosque occupies a substantial community building, the Fourth Avenue Mosque a semi-detached house), length of establishment (the Bull Lane Mosque has been present for some years, the Fourth Avenue Mosque has only emerged in the last few years) and resources (see Chapter 2).¹⁰ The Bull Lane Mosque is better-known in policy circles and is seen as representative of the Islamic population. Up to 300 Muslims may attend the Bull Lane Mosque for *jumma*, with about 100 others attending the Fourth Avenue Mosque. York has no formally recognised places of worship for other religions, other than various forms of Christianity. Thus Hindus or Sikhs, for example, have to travel to Leeds (35 miles)

or Scunthorpe (45 miles) to attend a temple or *gurdwara*.

Next we attempted to identify *community sector organisations* in the city. This presented us with particular difficulties as we came to identify a wide range of organisations which appeared, from their names, to be representative of particular ethnic or national groups but which, on close examination, had no formal structure or constitution and could thus not be regarded as representative in any way other than through having a broad cultural orientation. Most of these groups turned out in fact to be cultural focuses, enabling people from particular ethnic backgrounds to meet and engage in activities such as eating, music, dancing, religion or simply maintaining their cultural links rather than having a particular outward focus, for example, engaging in wider political activities such as presenting a coherent case for their needs to be met by policy agencies.

In most cases, these organisations had an approximate idea of the size of their communities but suggested that this was subject to steady change (usually growth) over time. Thus, although there were apparently representative and more long-standing community groups such as the Indian Cultural Association (which organised events annually, in particular the religious ceremony of lights, Diwali), the Bangladeshi Community Association (largely comprising restaurateurs) and the Chinese Community Association (which also organised the annual Chinese New Year celebrations), even these had varying degrees of formal constitution. Many other community organisations appeared essentially to operate as cultural networks or friendship groups. This is not necessarily problematic for them, of course, but it does make communication between them and policy organisations, which often require them to demonstrate some sort of representative accountability, difficult.

The final stage was the point at which what had been a process of assembling a jigsaw puzzle began to take the form of a detective story. This involved starting with some *well-signposted people, places or facilities*, either previously known to

the research team (all of whom lived in or around York) or mentioned in conversations, articles or at events, following them up and then following the leads through a process of networking (making use of existing networks to pass or extract information), snowballing (asking respondents who else we should be talking to), observation (literally walking the streets), making use of directories (organisational lists in the public library and elsewhere, or making use of telephone Yellow Page entries) and triangulation (cross-checking information about particular groups or individuals or data against similar information gained from other respondents). The aims in all these investigations were to identify how many different minority ethnic groups were present in York, and how many people were associated with each group. Because a number of minority ethnic groups (particularly, in the case of York, those of South Asian, Turkish, Chinese and Italian origins) are also strongly associated with the preparation and retailing of food, either through restaurants, grocers or fast food establishments, we enumerated all such establishments in the city, including visiting major suburban centres (e.g. Acomb/Woodthorpe, Clifton/Burtonstone Lane, Fishergate, Heslington/Fulford, Heworth, Tang Hall) as well as in the city centre, and visited a sample of them to help us estimate the total numbers of those engaged in these occupations and those associated with them through family or friendship ties.

Partly with the help of an informal network, York Interfaith and Churches Together in York, but also through intensive informal investigation, we identified a range of under-used churches (of which there are probably a disproportionate number in the city) that were used by minorities of either Christian or other faiths, which also helped us identify previously unidentified minority ethnic groups.¹¹ We were led, as well as to – perhaps the most obvious establishments – churches and other places of worship, and food establishments, also to leisure and community centres, to pubs and a wine bar, a snooker hall, to an estate agent, to people's homes and even to the car parks of a prominent local supermarket. Some of the investigation also involved contact with people and organisations outside York.¹² The work was time-consuming and

certainly very unusual in terms of social research methodology, and some led to dead ends or at best to little additional knowledge. However, we judged that it was better to explore all possible avenues rather than to overlook some unpromising areas of exploration. What was also significant here were the skills of the two main fieldworkers who were able to speak a range of languages, and/or were already well-known to many local minority ethnic people and could often operate on the basis of this knowledge or on personal recommendation, while keeping an appropriate research 'distance' from their respondents.

We now turn to analysing this data, first looking at the quantitative data collected in the course of the study. We hoped this would give us some idea of the numbers of minority ethnic people in the city or at least confirm the hunches of others. Chapter 5 then focuses on qualitative data, giving us a better idea of the diversity of York's population.