

# Family Voice for The Race Equality Commission

Family Voice is Nasim, Janine and Kate. Nasim is British Pakistani, Janine is British Indian and Kate is the daughter of a European immigrant.

We work with families in the Nether Edge, Lowfield and Sharrow area of Sheffield.

We work hard to reduce the disadvantages people face because of their background and current situation. We particularly work with isolated mums who are even more heavily disadvantaged.

## **These are some of the barriers we work to remove / alleviate / bypass:**

- Lack of esteem to feel they are worth it (having an opinion, talking about themselves, looking after themselves, deserving to enjoy themselves)
- Lack of self confidence to identify their needs and express them
- Limited spoken, expressive English
- Limited understanding of others spoken English
- Limited education
- Patriarchism
- Domestic abuse
- Modern Day Slavery - and/or being treated like a slave by in-laws
- Poverty
- Lack of access to money (although money may be in the family)
- Lack of understanding of support available
- Lack of confidence in being out of the house
- Lack of confidence in meeting new people
- Fear of what others will say / gossip
- Learning difficulties
- Mental health problems - living in fear, depression
- Physical health problems - esp diabetes and heart
- Lack of understanding of how systems work in UK
- Lack of meaningful communication with schools
- Lack of understanding of the world their children are growing up in / beyond their domestic world
- Children particularly vulnerable to grooming into local drugs trade
- Children particularly vulnerable to disengaging from school
- Difficulties of single parenting when your culture is unsupportive of divorce
- The grief, the loss, the distance of their mothers and families (especially when feeling lost here as well)

## **What work do we do that tries to reduce these barriers women and families face ?**

- Build trusting relationships with women, starting by us understanding the barriers they face and respecting the huge influence these have

- Talking and being with people - during the pandemic we have talked to mums more than ever before. We have made thousands of phone calls to regularly check in with mums, to support them when they are low, to help them with what they need at that moment
- Encouraging situations which are on their terms, not always ours - lots of home / doorstep /yard visits
- Working with skills / confidence they have - e.g.cooking, sewing (we are just starting a food hygiene and food selling project)
- Listening and responding to women's needs
- We run very informal, friendly classes to bring women into a positive social and then learning environment

Example of How Women we work with are disadvantaged:

### **English Classes -**

In some countries English classes are accessible for all.

The restrictions on English classes have grown massively in the last ten years. For most classes women have to either pay or be receiving certain benefits. Many of our mums do not have access to money in their household and their husbands work in low paid jobs.

Therefore they cannot attend local ESOL classes.

We have worked hard to increase the provision of free conversation classes, working closely with Sheffield Assoc of Volunteer Teachers of English. SAVTE really get it - they understand the barriers that women face, they understand that accessibility is what it's all about and that people don't learn unless they are comfortable and have trusting relationships in the classroom.

### **What do these barriers all add up to?**

Fearful of the world outside their homes, unconfident to connect to it, not understanding their children's education and how best to support them, not having the confidence to lay down boundaries with their children, difficulty keeping a connection with their boys as they grow up in the modern world, massive fear but little knowledge of the drug business going in the local streets and how to protect their children from it.

Schools have great potential to help alleviate barriers and enable social mobility for their children. This is why we are also key players in SHARE - Sheffield Anti Racist Education. Conference coming in October.

We are keen to make sure people realise how women face this racial inequality. We specialise in this geographical area and do our best to build relationships and understanding of women's situations.

