Written evidence submitted by Kalwinder Sandhu, Coventry Women’s Voices, to the Gender Pay Gap Inquiry

1. Coventry Women’s Voices welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the UK’s House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee regarding its inquiry to inform government strategy on reducing the gender pay gap for women over 40.

About Coventry Women’s Voices

2. Coventry Women’s Voices (CWV) is an independent group of women’s organisations, organisations working with women, trade unions and individual women that have come together to ensure women’s voices are heard when policy is made in Coventry.

About this submission

3. This submission draws on the findings of an on-going project carried out by Coventry Women’s Voices in partnership with the Centre for Human Rights in Practice at the University of Warwick into the impact of the public spending cuts on women in Coventry. More details of this project are given below. During the course of the project we uncovered a great deal of evidence about the labour market situation of women in Coventry, including evidence of a gender pay gap between women and men, and a pay gap experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women with both white women and men. This submission concentrates on the pay gap experienced by BAME women.

Executive Summary

Introduction

4. BAME women face barriers to accessing the labour market and discrimination within the workplace which contribute to a significant pay gap compared to white women and men of all ethnic groups. Significant barriers include:

Key Factors

- The lack of availability and affordability of childcare and elder care and the disproportionate caring of adults undertaken by BAME women. This has been exacerbated by cuts to public provision of childcare and cuts to adult social care.
• Reduction in provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, and reduction in childcare support for those attending these classes
• Failure of the Work Programme to address the needs of BAME women.
• Failure of Job Centres to address the needs of BAME women.
• The disproportionate impact of cuts to jobs in the public sector on BAME women.
• A combination of sex and race discrimination faced by BAME women which has a cumulative impact over a lifetime.

Lack of data

5. Lack of disaggregated data broken down by gender, age and ethnicity make it extremely difficult to ascertain the true picture of BAME women’s experiences of the labour market and how different ethnic groups of BAME women are affected.

Recommendations

6. Further research on the barriers experienced by BAME women to access the labour market including social mobility impacts of austerity
7. Investigate impact of The Work Programme on BAME women at a local and national level and identify actions to be taken to correct problems identified.
8. Public Bodies and unions to collect data and monitor impact of redundancies broken down by ethnicity, gender and age.
9. It is important to monitor the pay gap for BAME women, alongside a range of other comparative employment data.
10. Ensure public bodies, including universities collate and provide access to data that is disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexuality
11. In order to ascertain how the gender pay gap is impacting on BAME women aged 40 and over, women’s experiences in early adulthood need to be researched and monitored over time.

Background

12. CWV conducted research highlighting the impact of the cuts on all women in Coventry. Although our focus was Coventry our findings apply across the country.
13. The first report ‘Unravelling Equality’ showed that women are likely to lose more jobs, more services, be hit harder by cuts to benefits and have to do more unpaid work as services disappear. It also showed
that different groups of women were affected in different ways as their
gender intersects with their ethnicity, class, disability and age. CWV and Warwick University then published ‘Getting off Lightly or Feeling the Pinch’ which researched how the cuts affect older women (aged 55 and over).

14. The third report called ‘Layers of Inequality’ looked at the particular experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women. This submission is based on this research and concentrates on the key factors that contribute as barriers to the gender pay gap for BAME women.

15. In the current climate of austerity, BAME women in Coventry, particularly those working in the public sector, are being affected by job losses and pay freezes as a result of public spending cuts. The Runnymede Trust has found that particular groups of BAME women are disproportionately likely to be employed in the public sector putting them at greater risk of job losses.¹

16. Across the public sector in Coventry unions reported a pattern of job losses and competency hearings against BAME women workers. CWVs recommends that this require further investigation.

17. Re-employment rates after redundancy are lower for women than for men and there is evidence that the Work Programme is failing to meet the needs of BAME women in Coventry.

18. Cuts to childcare and reduced provision for ESOL impact on BAME women’s ability to access and remain within the labour market.

19. These factors may exacerbate an existing pattern of low paid, insecure employment and higher than average rates of economic inactivity among BAME women who already face a variety of barriers to accessing the labour market, including a combination of sexism, ageism and racism.

20. This complex situation means that it is very important to monitor the pay gap for BAME women, alongside a range of other comparative employment data. This should be done by public sector organisations and unions.

The Importance of Disaggregated Data

21. The biggest barrier to undertaking this research was the lack of local and national data disaggregated by gender, race, age and

disability. Often data that was available was broken down by gender, or ethnicity but not both.

22. Where data was disaggregated by ethnicity it was often split into ‘white’ and ‘BAME’. This obscured the significant differences between different ethnic groups.

23. This lack of availability of disaggregated data makes it difficult to project or monitor the impact of policies on BAME women. Unless data is broken down by both ethnicity, gender and age and is accessible we cannot accurately assess the impact of policies, monitor impact in practice or determine where there are gaps in services exist and therefore accurately provide the right services in the future.

24. Some sets of data do exist, for example Job Seekers Allowance and so we were able to ascertain the level of out of work benefits claimed by women in different ethnic groups over a number of years. Between February 2009 and February 2013 the number of women in Coventry claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) increased by 38%. Over the same period, BAME women in Coventry claiming JSA increased by 74.4%. When disaggregating the data by ethnic group we were able to ascertain the following.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Female JSA claimants Feb 2009</th>
<th>Female JSA Claimants Feb 2013</th>
<th>Percentage increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/Black African/Caribbean British</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian British/Indian/Bangladeshi/Pakistani</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed White+Black Caribbean/Mixed White+Black African/Mixed White+Asian</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>160%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non British and Irish</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>272.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese and Chinese other ethnic group and Other ethnic group</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>1505</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Nomis (2013) Job Seekers Allowance Claimants data for Coventry by ethnicity, age, gender and duration February 2009 to February 2013, based on query run at website. Available online at http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/
Figure 1: women in Coventry claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Feb 2009 to Feb 2013

25. The relatively low increase amongst Asian women is the result of their low participation in the labour market as a group.

26. The increase in JSA rate for British Asian women hides further differences between women of Indian origin as claimants of JSA the rate rose slightly over the period before falling back to the same rate as 2009, while for women of Bangladeshi origin the number of claimants doubled and for those of Pakistani origin almost doubled. Similarly, for Black or Black African women the rate more than doubled and for Black and Black Caribbean women the number of claimants rose by 71%.

27. These figures were obtained for all adult women. It was not possible to search the data set for JSA claimants who were women over 40 by ethnicity. The age ranges specific to 40 years for the purposes of this submission are categorised as ‘25 to 49’ and ‘50 and over’. Therefore to ascertain the JSA claimants who are women, within different ethnic groups and aged 40 and over is not currently possible with the current data that is available.

Impact of Job losses in the Public Sector

28. BAME women, in particular Black Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, are more likely to work in the public sector, as evidenced by a report by The Runnymede Trust and concluded this means that they are likely to be disproportionately affected by public sector job cuts.³

29. Throughout the research unions’ commented on the frequency with which BAME women lost jobs. They also highlighted an important distinction between jobs lost through early retirement or voluntary redundancy and those lost through compulsory job losses. The former can result in higher pay-outs compared to compulsory redundancies. BAME women tend to be in less senior roles and so will less likely to receive higher pay-outs. It is therefore important to collect data and monitor impact of redundancies broken down by ethnicity, gender and age and separate voluntary and compulsory redundancies.

30. The research uncovered that BAME women feel that Job Centres and other forms of support are not accessible to them. This can lead to

BAME women either remaining economically inactive or entering the informal economy.

**BAME women often tend to find jobs by word of mouth and it becomes self-perpetuating because these women are under the radar; an undocumented labour force. They don’t even access the job centres, treated as casual labour, lowly paid, without pensions and have no rights**

Pragna Patel, Director Southall Black Sisters

31. Support services are therefore of great importance and need to be accessible to BAME women.

**The Work Programme**

32. Government schemes that exist to support women to access the labour market have not proved successful in finding work for women of any ethnic background, but BAME women have fared worse than white women. Up to July 2012 the figures for Coventry were as follows:4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number Referred</th>
<th>Number found jobs</th>
<th>Percentage of cohort who found jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other ethnic groups</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Work Programme: Referrals and job outcomes for women in Coventry

33. The Work Programme has had a low success rate for women from all ethnic groups. However, both this data and research from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community’s inquiry into ethnic minority female unemployment5 suggest the work programme is disproportionately failing BAME women. A National Audit Office report into The Work Programme6 found that the contractors planned to spend up to 54% less on harder to reach groups than originally

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contracted. For BAME women who are on the programme this could mean a reduction from £1360 in the original bid to £630 per person. This requires investigation at a local and national level and action taken to correct problems identified.

ESOL Provision

34. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision is vital for non-English speaking BAME women to access the labour market. Our research uncovered the fact there is huge demand for ESOL classes but women are unable to access them because of reduced provision and cuts to childcare support. One provider commented:

*We had 60 women who wanted to enrol for ESOL but only 10 of them met the criteria for funding. Henley College, which provides ESOL courses through our centre, have had a reduction in childcare support, which means that we cannot offer childcare places to all the women who want them.* Christine McNaught, Director Foleshill Women’s Training

35. The research participants expressed a desire to learn English but the change in criteria, reduced ESOL provision and lack of child care for women to access the courses are barriers they face. Inability to speak, read and write English becomes a barrier to applying for jobs requiring the use of technology for online applications.

Caring Responsibilities

36. Cuts to childcare provision are a major barrier to women finding work. Cuts to childcare will have an impact on all working parents, but will cause particular problems for lone parents who do not have another parent with whom to share childcare. The 2007 annual survey (Families and Children Study) investigated the situation of British families with dependent children and found families with a black (African, Caribbean or black British) mother were more likely than families with a white mother to be lone parents (53 per cent compared with 25 per cent).7 Furthermore, 65% of African Caribbean children live in one parent families and are most likely to be raised by their mother.8

37. BAME women, as adult carers experience barriers. Proportionately they provide more care. Research by Carers UK shows that there are

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8 Normanton, K. And Corner, L. (2013) “Young, black and proud to be a father.” The Guardian.
around 500,000 BAME carers in the UK and that they provide proportionately more care than white carers.⁹

38. Research participants reported increased pressures to provide unpaid care for family members and sometimes resulting in challenges to keeping their paid jobs and their caring roles. A support worker working with carers highlighted the fact that cultural expectations could make these pressures worse for BAME women than for white women:

*In BME households with extended families people are brought up with the values to look after each of their sick family members. If the parents are elderly they expect siblings to look after their disabled siblings. Many of these find it difficult to strike the balance between caring and continuing with their jobs.* Support Worker

39. With additional responsibilities within caring roles together with barriers faced accessing the labour market BAME women may have fewer opportunities to access higher paid jobs, may be forced to remain in low paid jobs in order to fit around caring responsibilities, may experience language barriers etc. which all add to the gender pay gap for BAME women.

**Impact on Social Mobility**

40. The gender pay gap is influenced by BAME women’s ability to access learning and obtain qualifications. Therefore in order to address the pay gap for BAME women over 40 years there needs to be an understanding of women’s experiences of policies in early adulthood up to the age of 40. In the focus groups for this research BAME women talked about the combined impact of the university fees, together with job losses, cuts to benefits and the rising cost of living. One woman said.

*My husband has lost his job and we don’t have much money and so we are only thinking about now sending our son to university and not our daughter.* Focus Group Participant

41. Other women in the same focus group agreed. This illustrates the potential huge societal impact where access to learning is curtailed as the decision to go to university, the courses she studies, and where she studies can be a family decision. With no money coming into the

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family the women are the first to go – the first to lose out. If this is an indication of what is going to happen then this has a huge societal impact for some groups of BAME women in the future where young women are not given the opportunity to fulfil their potential and then experience gender and race pay gaps in their later years. There needs to be a distinction between overseas students and British BAME students in order to ascertain how particular groups of British BAME women students are accessing higher education.

Recommendations

42. Further research on the barriers experienced by BAME women to access the labour market including social mobility impacts of austerity
43. Investigate impact of The Work Programme on BAME women at a local and national level and identify actions to be taken to correct problems identified.
44. Public Bodies and unions to collect data and monitor impact of redundancies broken down by ethnicity, gender and age.
45. It is important to monitor the pay gap for BAME women, alongside a range of other comparative employment data.
46. Ensure public bodies, including universities collate and provide access to data that is disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexuality
47. In order to ascertain how the gender pay gap is impacting on BAME women aged 40 and over, women’s experiences in early adulthood need to be researched and monitored over time.

Kalwinder Sandhu – Coventry Women’s Voices

The full report can be found here: