

Settling In

Experiences of Women on Spousal Visas in the UK

“Being lonely is tough as it makes you feel down.”

“We have got a waste of talent”

eaves
putting women first

About Eaves

Eaves is a charity working on all forms of violence against women and girls. Eaves delivers frontline services to women and also undertakes advocacy, lobbying, campaigning and research. Many of the women Eaves works with have been affected by the No Recourse to Public Funds Rule and some have insecure immigration status.

Eaves is particularly well known for its Poppy project working with survivors of trafficking. Eaves also works with women wishing to exit prostitution, women suffering domestic and sexual violence, women affected by the criminal justice system and women trying to rebuild their lives after violence.

About the Project

“Settling In” was a 20 month research project funded by the European Integration Fund to look into the experiences of women coming to settle in the UK on spousal visas. The research wanted to understand what was involved for these women in “Settling In”, what did “settling in” or “integration” mean to them and what challenges and barriers did they face. The project was supported by an expert steering group comprising Professor Eleonore Kofman, Dr. Katharine Charsley, Dr. Hiranthi Jayaweera, Jitka Markova, Ruth Grove-White. The research was conducted by Nisan Z. Kesete with Danielle Thom and Heather Harvey.

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3.6.1. (b) Access to interpretation	65
3.6.2 Banking.....	67
3.7 Social life	68
3.7.1 Language.....	69
3.7.2 Lack of opportunities	70
3.7.3 Dependency	70
3.7.4 Prejudice.....	72
3.7.5 Misunderstandings	72
3.7.6 Easy to make friends	73
3.7.7 Making friends	74
3.7.8 Women with children	75
3.7.9 Community centres.....	76
3.7.10 Voluntary sector organisations	77
3.7.11 Older Women	77
3.7.12 Friends at work	78
3.7.13 Language spoken with friends	78
3.8 Media and public rhetoric on migration.....	79
3.9 Domestic violence including controlling behaviour from partner or family members	81
3.10 Overall lack of Information	83
3.11 Belongingness	84
Chapter 4: Recommendations from migrant women	86
4.1 Good Practice.....	87
Chapter 5: Findings Part II.....	90
5.1 Women’s understanding of “integration”	90
5.2 Gender.....	93
Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations.....	101

Appendices

I	Information pack	108
II	Research consent Form.....	111
III	‘Settling In’ focus group: Part I – individual questions.....	112
IV	‘Settling In’ focus group: Part II – group discussion	120
V	Interview guideline questions for professionals.....	121

List of figures

Figure 1:	Participants’ duration of stay in the UK.....	33
Figure 2:	Countries of origin of research participants	34
Figure 3:	Issues considered when deciding to migrate	38
Figure 4:	Employment before coming to the UK	40
Figure 5:	Employment secured in the UK	40
Figure 6:	Types of employment.....	46
Figure 7:	Career advice provider.....	49
Figure 8:	Language used at work.....	50
Figure 9:	Highest level of qualification	52
Figure 10:	Ability to use qualification.....	52
Figure 11:	Enrolment in education or training in the UK	54
Figure 12:	Payment for study or training	55
Figure 13:	Education and training information provider	56
Figure 14:	English language course in the UK.....	58
Figure 15:	Payment for English language course	59
Figure 16:	Housing.....	61
Figure 17:	Travel.....	63
Figure 18:	Information on how and where to access medical services in the UK.....	64
Figure 19:	Bank account	67
Figure 20:	Easy to make friends in the UK.....	69
Figure 21:	Friends in the UK	74
Figure 22:	Nationality of friends	75
Figure 23:	Language spoken with friends	78
Figure 24:	Feeling of belongingness	84

Glossary

CBP	European Common Basic Principle
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
DBIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EC	European Commission
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JCP	Job Centre Plus
NARIC	National Recognition Information Centre
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
TCN	Third Country National
UK	United Kingdom
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

Executive Summary

Background to the report

Women who come to the UK on Spousal or Partner visas are legitimately in the UK and on a route to settlement. They may be expecting to make a life here permanently with their partner, and are entitled so to do. This usually requires being economically active, raising children, making friends, creating a social life and ultimately feeling part of the community in which they live. Women with limited language proficiency are, in most cases, keen to improve their English. Some are eager to engage in further education. Many women are actively seeking employment to further their career, contribute to society and meet the costs of supporting their families. Such aspirations are what Governments purport to support in principle in their migration and integration policies.

This research sought to look more closely at who these women are. It aimed to explore these women's expectations when they come to the UK and how far are they met. It explored challenges these women face when trying to settle in and to what extent policy frameworks are a help or hindrance to this process. The research also focussed on women's own definitions of "integration" as opposed to the more commonly discussed policy and academic definitions.

Methodology

The research includes a short literature review. There is a vast field of research across migration and integration but a more limited field with a focus specifically on women's migration and integration or on the impact on gender relations and norms. There is a smaller field still focussing specifically on women on spousal or partner visas. Work with a gendered focus has become more common in recent years but in the UK there has still been a preponderance of literature focussing on the South Asian Community. However, the profile of spouses is extremely varied and arguably our assumptions about who they are, their aspirations and their competencies have not reflected this variety.

The research also looked at policy literature from local authorities across Greater London and the South East (the focus areas of this research). It was not always obvious which policies to consult. Policies relating to migration and integration, specifically of women, was usually found in areas such as community safety, health and well-being, community or social cohesion, equalities inter alia.

The research involved a combination of 86 one-to-one interviews with women generating quantitative data analysed in SPSS, and focus groups with the women to emulate more discursive reflection. There were a further ten in depth one-to-one interviews with women

and 40 interviews with practitioners and stakeholders which were analysed using thematic coding. The research benefitted from the advice and input of an expert steering group throughout the life of the project. The research was funded by the European Integration Fund.

Key Findings

A number of key findings across seven main headings are outlined below. The recommendations, which are discussed in the body of the report, are implicit in the findings as summarised.

One of the most striking findings is that despite the huge diversity of participants in terms of geographical and socio-economic background, there are consistencies regarding the barriers to integration. From USA to Yemen, Venezuela to China, women find it difficult to create a social life and friendships in the UK, especially with British people who do not have any migration history or background. Migrant women find it very difficult for employers and colleges to recognise their education and their immense work experience from their country of origin. Migrant women normally wish to work and improve their English language proficiency but face a range of often similar barriers. For instance, they find it difficult to access the right information, which could make an enormous difference in their life and their settling in experience.

This research also finds that the profile of migrant women who come as spouses is extremely varied. Women make sacrifices and take risks by coming to the UK but always considerable courage in striking out, starting anew, facing up to what is often a setback to their career and education and taking the initiative to reach out and make their migration beneficial.

The research touches on some important ways in which the migration experience has differential impacts for men and women and can affect, negatively or positively, gender relations and norms between couples, and for individuals.

Education

- The vast majority of participants in this research (91.86 percent) had been enrolled in formal education prior to arrival in the UK.
- The majority of participants (58 percent) had graduate and post graduate qualifications, often more than one.
- In some cases women had sacrificed their own education, career and social and familial networks in order to come to the UK because their spouse or partner had been struggling succeed it in the women's country of origin.

-
- Few participants had received information and advice about converting their qualifications or obtaining official recognition for them. Very few participants had heard of the formal body designed for this purpose, UK NARIC, or understood the procedure or grounds for making assessments of qualification equivalence.
 - Participants routinely, irrespective of country of origin (for instance including North American countries) found that UK employers and colleges rarely value, respect or understand women's prior qualifications or work history.
 - Despite being eager to take up further education to obtain UK qualifications that UK employers would value, very few women were in further education in the UK due to barriers relating primarily to costs and caring responsibilities.

Employment and volunteering

- The vast majority of participants of working age were keen to obtain employment.
- As many as 57 percent of the sample had been in employment prior to coming to the UK but as many as 58 percent had not managed to obtain employment after arrival in the UK.
- In many cases, women were prepared to accept jobs that were significantly inferior to their previous employment history or their qualifications just to gain the experience and to be working.
- The majority of participants who are working (71 percent), were employed only on a part-time or voluntary basis but mostly would have preferred greater work opportunities. These findings point to major, yet potentially avoidable, under-employment, lack of productivity and a waste of talent and skills.
- Women found little or no helpful careers advice information with job centres, as they are only available to those on benefits (to which these women are not entitled). There is no advice on CV and interview skills that could make all the difference.
- Women of all backgrounds are prepared to volunteer, 32 percent of the sample were volunteering at the time of interview and many more had at some stage volunteered in the UK. Some women were keen but unable to take up volunteering as they could not access free child care. Some volunteering, however, was not suitable and in some instances actually jeopardised or delayed their access to appropriate paid work.

Language

- Participants had varying levels of language proficiency but all participants were keen to access English lessons, and felt English was essential to integration. They felt that English classes should be tailored to meet different women's needs. As well as more formal exam based and grammatical classes; this could include conversation, humour and social interaction.
- Participants, for the most part, were unable to take up language classes unless both the classes and child care were free. However, immigration restrictions often prevented them from accessing free services. This delays their ability to improve English and so also hinders integration routes like employment.
- Participants were willing to pay for English classes but could not afford to do so. Standards and quality were inconsistent, classes were often very expensive, the process was often rigid, inflexible and sometimes exploitative.

Social life and well-being

- Migrant women who participated in the research wanted to make friends, including specifically British friends, and tried very hard to do so, feeling that a social network was essential to integration.
- Participants routinely, irrespective of country of origin, found it extremely hard to make British friends. Over 90 percent of women felt they had made friends in Britain but 72 percent said their friends were from among people from their own country of origin and 56 percent said they had friends from other nationalities but not British – though not for the want of trying.
- Research participants felt that although the British people they met are polite and friendly, they are very reserved sometimes with little or no interest in making friends or including migrant women into their social circle.
- Most friends were made via community centres and community events, language classes and via spouse and family. Even for those working and volunteering, very few made their friends here.
- Many women experienced intense isolation leading to a loss of self-esteem, depression and mental health problems.

Barriers to accessing services

- Participants cited costs such as transport and childcare as a barrier to accessing services.
- Issues with language were a major obstacle. This was exacerbated by the lack of provision of appropriate and professional interpretation.
- Participants consistently cited a lack of information about how to access services, and which services are available as a barrier.
- Participants highlighted that certain services are lifelines but are hugely financially stretched and at risk – free language classes, community centres and NGO support organisations in particular were mentioned.

Information

- There was a distinct lack of information available to women coming to settle in the UK across every field of life, for example, registering with a GP, knowing what age it is required to enrol children in education, opening a bank account and obtaining a National Insurance Number, being aware of emergency services numbers, and realising that police and social services can be a source of help not a danger.
- This lack of crucial information meant women often relied on what people told them and so could be misinformed. In some instances, information was deliberately withheld.

Immigration status

What women actually perceived as insecure immigration status, despite their visa giving them a route to settlement, was itself a huge barrier to integration:

- Dependence on a spouse creates uncertainty, stress, anxiety and isolation and is in some cases a feature of domestic violence.
- A hostile media, political and populist attitude to migration is frightening and demoralising to women and not conducive to integration.
- Employers are confused and deterred by women's visa status and often would refuse to take women as they are poorly informed about her right to work.
- Scarce financial resources must be set aside to pay for repeated visa renewals and UK immigration tests.
- The Life in the UK and English Language tests are sometimes very difficult for migrant women, for instance for those with low level of literacy even in their own language. Failure to pass these tests, besides costing money for resits, also delays obtaining

Indefinite Leave to Remain which for many women is key in their sense of settling in and integration.

- Women are often affected by the no recourse to public funds rule such that the key things which still remain and are intended to support integration and employment (language classes, child care, and jobs advice from the Job Centre etc.) are not open to this group of women.

Conclusions

Women summed up their idea of “integration” as:

- A process that takes a considerable amount of time;
- A process that depends on the available opportunities and personal traits of an individual;
- An opportunity to have a fulfilled life, with complete independence; including financial independence;
- An opportunity to be an active contributing member of society; socially and politically;
- Being comfortable and at ease, and not being made to feel like a foreigner;
- Being accepted by the settled community but retaining your own identity, being treated as equals and having a social life that includes British people.

Women’s own analysis of integration may appear to reflect the policy discourse about indicators of integration. For instance women commonly cite language, employment and social life as relevant. In fact, it shows a much more balanced analysis that places significant onus on migrant women themselves to make the efforts and changes necessary, but also highlights the vital role of the “settled community” and the powers of the Government, policy makers and service providers in hindering or facilitating the integration process.

Women’s own analysis of integration or settling in places a high value on simply knowing one’s way around, knowing where to go for information, how to navigate the system and feeling at ease. These are relatively cheap and easy steps to take for a substantial difference in the lives of the migrant women and society as a whole.

However, women’s sense of self-worth, well-being and of feeling settled, is dependent on personal relationships, connections, exchanges and interactions not just with family but with friends and colleagues. This is a much more difficult aspect to “fix” given the findings relating to the difficulties of making friends with the British community.

Next steps

Additional questions and areas of possible further study are indicated. The interaction between immigration status and women's health is one such area. The combined effect for women of gender and immigration status on her and her children is another. Still more detailed analysis of the gendered impact of this migration experience on spousal and partner relationships is needed. Longitudinal studies tracking the migration journey of women would be valuable.

This research will hopefully be of use to resource allocation and policy and decision makers at national and local level in assessing the populations they serve, identifying practical policies projects and measures that can support this group of women's integration. It is also intended that it will provide the basis for the development of practical toolkits and information packs to support women settling in and that it may inspire the development of initiatives that draw in and use the talents, experience and expertise of these women for the sake of those arriving after them, and indeed for wider societal benefit.

Introduction

Eaves is a charity working with women survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Between November 2009 and March 2012, Eaves ran the Sojourner Project. This was a government funded pilot project to provide limited and temporary support to women subject to the No Recourse to Public Funds Rule (NRPF).¹ The pilot arose out of many years of campaigning by women's and human rights activists (Southall Black Sisters, 2008) frustrated by the barriers faced by this group of women when fleeing violence and seeking to access safety and justice.

Eaves, in common with many other agencies working with women² and as supported by a body of research (Grossman & Lundy 2007, Anitha, 2011, Burman & Chantler 2005, Gill, 2005, Girishkumar, 2014), found that the very fact of a woman's insecure immigration status could form part of, or exacerbate, both the abuse she faces at the hands of her perpetrator(s) and the barriers she faces when trying to access safety, justice, recovery and move-on. While the focus in the Sojourner Project is exclusively on the immediate relief and safety from violence, the cases also raised other issues when women were trying to rebuild their lives. Women experience additional challenges relating to lack of information, continuing barriers to services posed by the NRPF rule, English language difficulties, prejudice and stereotypes, and in all areas of life.

Eaves became interested to look into the broader context for women on spousal visas, as these additional barriers will impact on this group of women in varying ways, such as those experiencing domestic violence. Home office figures show that spousal/partner visas make up the majority of family reunion visas and the majority of these involve a female spouse or partner coming to join their partner in the UK.

Women who come to the UK on spousal visas are usually coming on a route to settlement. It would therefore seem sensible to design policy and practice in such a way as to facilitate this process. This is acknowledged in Government policy papers such as Department of Communities and Local Government 2012 yet as ever the implementation gap remains pronounced (Asylum Aid, 2014).

Women coming to the UK on spousal visas will face challenges in terms of race, gender and immigration status. Governments of every political persuasion feel a constant need to show that they are "tough on immigration" (Conservatives, 2015, Labour, 2015. The Daily Telegraph, 2013). The severity of their stance on immigration fluctuates in line with the political and economic climate of the day. In the last 18 years, successive governments have

¹ The NRPF requirement dictates that persons coming to the UK on marriage and certain other visas must be financially supported by their spouses or sponsor or must support themselves by working. They are not entitled to financial assistance from the state including most forms of welfare benefits, or social housing.

² Ashiana, Southall Black Sisters, Imkaan, Asylum Aid, Rights of Women, Women's Resource Centre

instituted several immigration reforms of ever more restrictive nature (Somerville, Srisankandarajah & Latorre, 2009, Grove-White, 2011). These are constantly met by legal challenges many of which have met with some success (BBC news, 2013).

By way of example, in 2012 restrictions to migration policy for those on spousal visas included that only those earning more than £18,600, were able to bring their spouses to the UK. This figure would rise significantly in cases where visa applications are also made for children (Home Office, 2012). An extension for those on spousal visas of the probationary period from two to five years was instituted. Additionally, couples had the requirement to prove a greater attachment to the UK than they have to any other country (Home Office, 2012) and English language tests were made more difficult, this was recently further tightened in April 2015 excluding many providers and certificates (British Council, 2015). Also, in 2015 a health surcharge has been added and has to be paid to submit an immigration application (Work permit, 2015). While such provisions will apply to all migrants, there is little evidence that Government has given due consideration to equalities considerations generally and specifically for women who still make up the majority of those on spousal visas.

Indeed, it is well established that government policies generally, including in relation to migration and integration, rarely include any integrated gender analysis (Kelly, Lovatt & Coy, 2008). It is only in recent years that academics in these fields themselves have started to focus either on women or on gender relations (Nawyn, 2010) in migration and integration. It is in this context that this research has sought to focus on the challenges that third country national women on spousal visas face when trying to "Settle In".

Chapter 1: Literature and policy review

Women, migration and integration

Defining migration and migrants

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines 'migration' as: "The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification" (International Organisation for Migrants, 2011). Although there is no universally accepted definition of 'migrant' the ILO defines migrants as "persons and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family" (International Organisation for Migrants, 2011).

In the UK there is no clear legal or policy definition of what a migrant is. Migrants have been defined as foreign born, foreign citizen, or by their movement into a new country to stay temporarily or to settle for the long-term (Anderson & Blinder, 2014). In some cases British children born in the UK from foreign-born parents and ethnic minorities who live in the UK have been included in the analysis of migration (Anderson & Blinder, 2014). The lack of a consistent definition poses problems in public debates and policy discourse around migration and migrants.

Women in the migration discourse

For many years migration has been considered as a male issue. Until the late 1970s, most of the discourse on international migration focused only on male migrants and also implied that most migrants were male (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, Castles & Miller, 1998). In the 1960s and early 1970s the phrase 'migrants and their families' was actually used for 'male migrants and their wives and children' (Simon & Brettell 1986, Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

This lack of acknowledgement of women as migrants in their own right meant there were no gendered statistics, as the data sources available for study of population flows did not include gender breakdowns (Casa & Garson, 2005). This obviously, contributed to the invisibility of migrant women and lack of assessment of the extent of female migration. The very first estimates in female migration, which covered the period between 1965 and 1990, were released in 1998 by the United Nations Population Division (Zlotnik, 2003). This revealed that women have actually accounted for a very high proportion of all international migrants for a very considerable time. For instance, in 1960, female migrants accounted for nearly 47 percent of people living outside of their countries of birth (Zlotnik, 2003). Since then

the number of female migrants has continued to increase internationally and especially in the 'developed' world. In 2000, in Europe migrant women constituted 52 percent (56 million) of all migrants (Zlotnik, 2003).

Although different factors, such as, better economic opportunities and fleeing persecution contribute to migration in women, family migration (family formation and family reunification) has been identified as one of the significant contributors to the increase in the share of women in migration flows to OECD³ countries (Forbes Martin, 2004). In general, migrating spouses are more likely to be women than men (Forbes Martin, 2004). In 2003, for instance, two-thirds of the migrants who entered the United Kingdom under the category of family reunification were women (Dumont & Liebig, 2005). In 2011, women comprised 70 percent of migrants admitted as spouses or fiancé(e)s (Blinder, 2015). Despite this fact, compared to other migrants, family migrants and especially women family migrants are a neglected group in the policy discourse (European Union, 2004). Researchers have noted the lack of focus on migration of women on spousal visas (Donato, 2014) and highlight that what research there is, in the UK, has predominantly focussed on South Asian Women (Charsley 2006, 2012).

It is important to note that family migrants, i.e. those who come for family unification are more likely to attain settlement in the UK than migrants who come via other routes. For instance, 61 percent of family migrants entering the UK in 2006 had been granted settlement by the end of 2011 (Blinder, 2015). This shows the importance of having an understanding and having a policy analysis on family migration and its gendered nature; including the challenges and barriers women face not only when they migrate but also when they try and settle or 'integrate' in the UK.

Integration

Integration of migrants has been said to be vital for all those concerned in promoting harmonious living between 'migrants' and the 'settled community'. It is also said that it could maximise the potential of migrants and migration. Still, before discussing the importance of integration, there should be some understanding of the concept itself, not only from the point of view of policy makers, but also from that of the migrants themselves. There should also be an understanding that migrants in general, and migrant women in particular, are not a homogeneous group such that there is no one-size-fits-all definition, policy or strategy on integration.

Circumstances, events and experiences, both pre and post arrival to the UK, influence integration of a migrant woman either positively or negatively. For instance, education levels before or after coming to the UK, experience of employment before or after coming to the UK, language proficiency, length of residence and many other factors play a significant role

³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international economic organisation of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

in the extent of migrants' interaction, integration and the challenges they face when they try to settle into life in the UK.

Defining integration

One of the main challenges in designing and implementing integration policies is the lack of consensus among policy makers and practitioners as to what integration means and what it entails. Integration could mean different things to different individuals and stakeholders depending on their objective, their specific circumstances and past experiences. Moreover, the debate as to what integration is seems to miss the most important element in the discourse – migrants.

Further, the terms are often contested (Rutter, 2013). For instance in the UK, until 2000 the term 'settlement' was preferred both by government and non-governmental bodies, as the term integration was felt to have connotations of the assimilationist policies of the 1950s and 1960s (Saggar et al., 2012). Assimilation mainly focused on how different migrants are, and how to make them like everyone else in every respect, reducing or eliminating all identifiable differences (Saggar et al., 2012). However, by 2000, the term integration had come back into use, although the reintroduction of the word did not bring any clarity to the concept itself (Rutter, 2013).

In the policy discourse, generally speaking, integration is primarily used to describe relations between migrants and the wider society or the so-called settled community. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines integration as “the process of mutual adaptation between host society and migrant. It implies a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values that binds migrants and their host communities to a common purpose. Integration is essential for all stakeholders, not only as a way of providing economic and cultural benefits but also for ensuring the security and stability of societies as a whole.” (International Organisation for Migration, 2012) Similarly, the European Council defines integration of Third Country Nationals (TCN)⁴ as “a continuous, two-way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of legally residing third-country nationals and the host societies” (European Union, 2003).

Understanding integration

Despite the difficulties arising from a lack of a single definition or understanding of the word integration, it is still being used in different policy discourses globally and in the UK. As such, it is important to try and understand perhaps the aims and outcomes of integration both amongst policy makers and migrant women. Although this cannot solve the problem of defining integration, it could shed some light on understandings of the concept.

⁴ Third Country Nationals (TCN) is a term used in the European Union to refer to non-EU foreign nationals

The European Handbook of Integration for Policy-makers describes the aim or goal of integration as 'self-sufficiency', i.e. "governments seek to enable migrants to lead an independent life concerning housing, job, education, social networks and participation in society" (European Union, 2010). Integration is also described as a process and more as a series of processes that occur in different and interlinked domains (such as education and employment) which are connected to each other and can only make sense when considered together (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010).

A Home Office commissioned study in 2004 described the process of integration by stating the desired outcomes. It states that "integration happens when an individual or a group achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities" (Ager & Strang, 2004). Besides, if an individual or groups are "socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and also have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship", they will be considered as integrated (Ager & Strang, 2004).

When does integration start?

According to some researchers, regardless of the existence or otherwise of integration policies, services for migrants and even with restrictive circumstances which negatively impact on the integration of migrants; the process of integration will start the moment a migrant arrives in a new country (Saggar & Somerville, 2012, Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010). Therefore many argue that any measures put in place around integration and any support provided to migrants should start at the latest as soon as a migrant arrives if not pre-departure. This is especially crucial when the migrant is for instance a family migrant who is known to be coming to settle in the UK with a British or settled family member. The European Commission (EC) also recognises the importance of starting the integration process in the early stages of migration and advises that integration measures should begin soon after arrival (Haque, 2010).

Involving migrants

As integration is understood to be a two way process between migrants and the settled community, the process or series of processes should involve engagement by both groups including institutions working on the issues (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010). This should also include involving such groups in defining and describing integration, in setting up the aims, the goals, the desired outcomes and the measurements of integration. If integration measurements or indicators are to contribute to any valuable insights they must be 'close to the real life experience of those going through the process' i.e. migrants and those working with migrants (European Union, 2010). They are the ones who have direct experience of inadequate policies and their consequences. They can draw attention to problems in areas

such as health care, housing, education and make suggestions for improvements (European Union, 2010).

Media and public rhetoric on migration

Attitudes and behaviours of the settled community have an important role to play in integration outcomes for migrants. For instance, if there is a widespread anti-migrant social and political sentiment amongst the settled community and they exhibit prejudice and stereotypes, that could lead to discriminatory practice around employment, housing and social interaction, the process of integration will be hindered significantly (Saggar et al., 2012). Anti-migrant political, media and social rhetoric seriously hamper the integration process. On the other hand raising awareness amongst the settled community and listening to their concerns can prevent or considerably improve understanding of migration and reduce tensions (Haque, 2010, Sachrajda, A. Griffiths, P. 2014).

Indicators of Integration

Indicators or bench markers of integration are important as they measure or provide an insight into the real situation of migrants and identify to what extent integration in different domains is progressing. They can also track the development of different integration policies over time (European Union, 2010). Among other things, indicators can be used to help measure and compare progress made and to monitor trends and developments in the area of integration (European Union, 2010). They also look into migrant participation and performance rates in the different domains of integration and evaluate the role, impacts and effectiveness of policy measures, if any. Most importantly, they identify gaps and areas for improvement and aid the effective targeting of resources (European Union, 2010).

Although there are no comprehensive indicators on migrants' integration and different types of indicators are used for different purposes and different audiences (European Union, 2010), there are some specific classifications that could be used to measure different domains of integration. The most general classification could be between economic integration, and social and cultural aspects of integration (Rutter, 2013). The boundary between the two is however not clear as for example, language proficiency could be of concern to those interested in economic integration and those interested in social and cultural integration; but they are likely to focus on them in different ways (Rutter, 2013). Amongst EU countries, the UK is an example of a country, which strongly emphasises the need for socio-economic integration as can be seen from an exploration of UK policies (Entizinger & Bieveld, 2003).

The European Handbook on integration classifies indicators into two broad categories; hard indicators and soft indicators. Hard indicators are often statistical or legal measurements stating the objective results of the different domains, such as, the employment rate of migrants or their access to services (European Union, 2010). On the other hand soft

indicators look into the attitudes or perceptions of migrants or the wider community, such as migrants' satisfaction in their jobs and the feeling of belongingness (European Union, 2010). Although, subjective indicators could be difficult to measure they are very important as they involve stakeholders in the process, making them much more relevant to migrants (European Union, 2010).

Domains of integration

There are different domains where integration is anticipated or expected to happen. Employment, education, health and housing are domains that are widely agreed as crucial factors in the integration process. It is also important, however, to include language proficiency and cultural knowledge of the settled community and safety and security as important facilitators. (Ager & Strang, 2004).

A Employment

The most widely recognised domain for successful integration has been the participation of migrants in the labour market, and the factors that affect it, such as education and language proficiency (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). In fact, most evidence seems to suggest that employment and language fluency are the most important drivers to integration (Haque, 2010, Juan, Hwang & Cao, 2010, Batalova & Creticos, 2008, Boyd & Cao, 2009, Chiswick & Miller, 2007, McHugh & Challinor, 2011). The two variables are intertwined because whilst language fluency mainly determines the prospects of employment, at the same time, employment improves language proficiency. The European Common Basic Principles (CBP) on integration state that "employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible." (European Union, 2003) Employment is also the most researched area of integration as it has been identified as a factor influencing many other relevant issues around integration; including economic independence, opportunity to meet members of the settled community, opportunity to gain broader cultural knowledge of the settled community and generally enhance social integration (Haque, 2010).

Migrant women, employment and earnings

Studies have shown that despite the fact that migrant women constitute a substantial proportion of the migrant population they are less represented in the labour market compared to migrant men (Rienzo, 2014). This is true to all migrant women irrespective of their educational levels although there is evidence that activity levels increase in line with levels of education. In Canada, Ireland, Norway and the UK, for instance, the share of migrant women with a tertiary level of education is higher compared to their native-born counterparts (Chammartin, 2002). However, whatever their level of education may be, migrant women are on the whole less well integrated into the labour market than female nationals (Dumont & Isoppo, 2005).

In London for instance, studies show that the economic activity patterns of male and female migrants of working age are different as women are three times as likely to be economically inactive as men (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010). A caveat, however, arises in terms of what constitutes 'economic activity.' Women migrants have long been active in the labour economy but this is not always visible (Morokvasic, 1993) when they are working unpaid or in low-pay, low-skill, informal and family businesses (Phizacklea, 1982). De-skilling is evident in most migration narratives and this is equally true of women migrants and sometimes exacerbated by a combination of racism and sexism (Kofman et. al. 2000). Quite a number of female migrants ultimately turn to setting up their own businesses (Phizacklea & Ram, 1996, Raghuram & Hardill, 1998) and it is not always clear to what extent this merely takes them off the books of the unemployed or to what extent it results in a viable income with tax receipts.

In 2011, a Home Office survey was conducted to provide estimates for the likely earnings and employment of spouses, civil and other partners and dependants coming to the UK. According to the findings, the overall employment rate for migrant women who were spouses, civil and other partners and dependants was 44 percent, considerably lower than the UK average for female employment, which is 53 percent (Home Office, 2011). As to their male counterparts; the overall employment rate for all male migrant spouses, civil and other partners and dependants is 66 percent compared to 64 percent for all UK males (Home Office, 2011).

This is the 'double disadvantage' many researchers discuss (Morokvasic, 1983, Simon & Bretell, 1986, Donato, 2014), showing that migrant women face discrimination both due to their gender and on the basis of their migration status (Heron, 2005). The gender hierarchies that affect all women in the host country will affect migrant women, influencing not only their job opportunities but also the work environment, and wages compared to their male counterparts (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Besides, gender stereotypes regarding the place of women in society influence the type of work many migrant women, and in some cases their partners/families, would consider suitable and to which women are recruited. In this way, traditionally "female" occupations, such as domestic service, nursing and the service industry (Boyd & Grieco, 2003); may feature heavily. Even such occupations may still be closed to some women if shift work and late nights are deemed inappropriate, not feasible or unsafe for women. Under-employment, i.e. holding a job which does not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the jobholder, is also a common factor in the experience of many migrants in the labour market (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Migrant women generally also earn less than men (migrant or non-migrant) and native-born women. According to figures published in 2011, in the UK, the pre-tax median wage of all females who have come to the UK as a spouse, civil or other partner or dependant was £15,000 compared to £21,300 for male migrant spouses, civil and other partners and dependants (Home Office, 2011). The reason provided for the low wage of migrant women in the UK was that they may be more likely to be involved in part-time work than men (Home

Office, 2011). This is not necessarily by preference, as many are in most cases compelled to work part-time, hold a temporary work contract, pushed into less-skilled occupations and systematically more exposed to under-employment than native-born women or men (European Union, 2010).

The limited participation and low wages of migrant women in the labour market are also in some cases attributed to the attitudes of employers toward migrant women and discrimination (Kofman et al., 2000). Employers sometimes prefer host country qualifications and do not even try and understand or recognise foreign qualifications or overseas work experience (Dumont & Isoppo, 2005). Another significant obstacle facing migrants in the labour market is the fact that jobs in many countries are filled through informal networks. Migrant women may have fewer of these networks than men or, where they do have them, the variety of occupations to which these networks provide access may be restricted (Heron, 2005).

Employment opportunities also appear to be affected by how soon after arrival migrants begin working and start to accumulate work experience in the receiving country. Migrant women who delay entering the workforce (or vocational training), for example for childcare or eldercare reasons, may face particular difficulties when they try to do so later (Heron, 2005). Child birth, lack of affordable child care and the lack of flexible working hours also have been identified as major factors in terms of the involvement of migrant women in employment. Having young children, under the age of two or three years significantly delays entry into the Labour market and this increases with each new child. This applies for all women but is exaggeratedly so for migrant women (Chammartin, 2002, Dumont & Isoppo, 2005).

While education and an extended period of residence do make it easier for migrant women to enter the labour market, neither of these two variables is a sufficient condition to guarantee that women will catch up. In some OECD countries, for instance, length of residence does not make for any improvement – for instance women from the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia continue to have the lowest labour market participation rates (Dumont & Isoppo, 2005).

Another important issue that should be raised is the migration status of women on family visas and the vulnerability that creates. A women's legal status is an important factor influencing the ease with which she will be able to adjust or settle. The legal status of migrant women in the UK who are on a spousal or partner visa is so closely tied to their husband's that this may leave them vulnerable to control or abuse. For instance, despite some provisions in the UK for migrant women on spousal visas who are victims of domestic violence, many are unwilling or reluctant to leave the abuser if the partner controls access to their legal status (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2003). This also has close ties with their entitlement and rights in the host country such as capacity to gain legal citizenship quickly, access to language training classes, access to employment training, and to access income security (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

B Housing

Housing is another domain that is identified (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010) as crucial to the integration process because housing conditions and security of tenure can impact on people's physical and emotional well-being. Some studies (Ibid.) show that migrants often choose to live near people of the same background, and this can be a factor for successful integration in a number of domains, including the labour market. UK Government policy since 2001 has seen such 'ethnic clustering' as socially problematic and negatively impacting on social cohesion despite the fact that there is evidence that this is not materially relevant. Analysis of the Home Office Citizenship Survey has found that the religious and ethnic concentration of a neighbourhood is statistically insignificant to a sense of belonging and identity with Britain across all groups (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010). Interestingly, in one study conducted in 2004, most migrants, referred to the 'social and cultural impacts of housing' i.e. the surrounding environment and schools as having a greater influence on their housing experience rather than the ethnic or migration background of their neighbours (Haque, 2010).

C Education

Education is also considered as an integral domain of integration because it is linked to economic independence, developing language proficiency, cultural knowledge, creating social links with other communities, and enabling migrants to convert skills and qualifications (Haque, 2010). Education clearly provides skills and competencies in support of subsequent employment enabling people to become more constructive and active members of society (Ager & Strang, 2008).

D Health

Although infrequently cited as a core factor in integration, good health has been widely seen as an important resource for the active engagement of migrants. Health was considered as one of the facilitators of integration, because 'good health' is essential for access to other key domains of integration such as employment and education (Jayaweera, 2014, Haque, 2010). Therefore it is crucial to make sure that migrants have reliable access to health services and are making effective engagement with key state services (Ager & Strang, 2008).

However, studies show that, migrants face health inequalities because of the barriers they experience in accessing health care, including restrictions on their entitlements. This includes lack of clarity around entitlements both amongst migrants and health professionals, institutional barriers and language barriers (Spencer, 2011, Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010). Language difficulties especially have been identified as one of the major hurdles for migrants in terms of accessing and communicating with health care professionals. In addition, lack of information about services available or about equivalences between different medicines also prevents some from taking up services, leads to inappropriate use of services, e.g. Accident and Emergency facilities for routine health problems and in some cases can be dangerous (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, in the UK context, there seems to be a lack of robust data

comparing migrants' health to that of the rest of the UK population (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010).

E Language

Language acquisition is seen as absolutely central to integration and a facilitator of integration in different domains such as the labour market and social integration. Most research shows that language acquisition is the key driver to social and economic integration (Haque, 2010). In the UK context, not being able to speak English has been seen as a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation in society. In light of this, availability of translation and interpreting services has been criticised in the UK as an inhibitor of language learning and thereby integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). This however is not completely true as research shows that translation and interpreting supports are crucial in the early stages of settlement, and given the length of time required to develop proficiency these services are likely to have ongoing significance (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Besides, there is evidence of the benefit of learning English as soon as possible after arrival, both in terms of language acquisition and in terms of integration (Batalova et al., 2008, Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010, Boyd & Cao, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to offer different levels of courses to migrants as soon as they arrive. It is also crucial to use different formats and a range of teaching methods to achieve successful language training for migrants with different educational backgrounds or previous knowledge of the country and language (Markova, 2012, European Union, 2010, Mallows, 2012).

The key point here though is that language courses should be accessible, affordable and of high quality and that their impact should be assessed regularly (European Union, 2010). Also, there needs to be regular assessment of the intakes of courses, their effectiveness and the extent to which they are beneficial to migrants and their integration. For instance, in Canada follow-ups are conducted in the employment outcomes of migrants who have undertaken language courses (Gidley & Jayaweera, 2010).

Current integration policy discourse in the UK

Immigration is one of the most sensitive of all areas of policy. At election times and in times of financial hardship, the rhetoric becomes highly charged (Sachrajda 2014, Saggur et. al. 2012). The UK government's approach to integration has changed substantially since the mid-1990s, with the emphasis shifting towards increasing the obligations on new, first-generation migrants to integrate by for instance introducing language and citizenship tests (Saggur & Sommerville, 2012). At the moment policies and strategies on integration in the UK mirror the localism agenda of the current Government. This is clear from the Communities and Local Government paper published in 2012. The document states:

“Integration means creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life... and so we are committed to rebalancing activity from centrally-led to locally-led action” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, p.7)

The document discusses extremism, terrorism, integration and cohesion all together. Indeed, it emphasises combating extremism and creating social cohesion rather than providing services or introducing policies or strategies that will enable migrants to integrate better into life in the UK. It states: “Integration benefits us all, and extremism and intolerance undermine this as they promote fear and division. An integrated society may be better equipped to reject extremism and marginalise extremists. The approach to integrated communities set out here is therefore central to long term action to counter extremism” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, p.2).

The document also encourages a laissez-faire approach to the integration process in the country. It states: “Successful, integrated communities are ones that make better use of informal support and care; are better equipped to resolve their own problems without state intervention; and can have higher levels of volunteering, social support networks and charity” (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, p.6). The document criticises the policies of the past in which “integration challenges were met in part with legal rights and obligations around equalities, discrimination and hate crime”. The solution proposed by the document is to have “change in the society and not changes to the law” (ibid) it further states that “government must not, as happens too often, stand in the way by dictating general solutions to complex local issues, or seeming to label some people as ‘different’ or requiring special treatment.” In fact, it outright disparages integration projects by stating, “People come together through day-to-day activities, not ‘integration projects’ which too often feel irrelevant and prove unsustainable.”

Despite advocating for a laissez-faire approach though, the Government also realises that it needs to create the conditions for integration to flourish through Government ‘actions’ and funding (Ibid.) It acknowledges that “integration comes from everyday life, and long-term social and economic challenges create barriers to integration which include “long-term unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour” and such issues “cannot be tackled with quick-fix solutions. However, the thrust of what policy it has, is again all aimed at the migrant and not at the “host society”.

The Mayor of London reviewed the pre-existing refugee integration strategy (2009) and widened it to include migrants in general. Commissioned by the Mayor, in 2010, ‘An evidence base on migration and integration in London’ was published by the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford. The document highlighted that there has been less policy attention so far on the integration of some groups of migrants, including family migrants. Unlike the DCLG document on integration, this document states the need to have policy intervention, especially with migrant groups that have newly arrived and those that are most disadvantaged. The document acknowledges that different legal frameworks

pertaining to migrants' rights and entitlements, different national, regional and local policies, and the tone of political debate on migration, impacts on the integration process of migrants positively or negatively.

The document recognises that integration involves engagement by both migrants and by individuals and institutions of the receiving society. It defines integration as:

“A series of dynamic multi-dimensional two-way processes of interaction and participation which begin the moment someone arrives in a place, whether they are staying for months or for life. They occur in different domains, economic, social, cultural, civic and in relation to identity, each of which is related and which need to be considered together and not in isolation.”

The document identifies some key areas as the Mayors' 'integration themes' including; the importance of acquisition of language, migrants' vulnerability in housing and poor accommodation conditions, the unemployment or under-employment of some migrants caused by barriers to full labour market participation and barriers related to access to health and social care (An evidence base on migration and integration in London, 2010).

Local authority's policies on migration and integration - Greater London and the Southeast of England

As part of the literature review, the desk research also reviewed different policies and strategies of local authorities (62 local authorities in the Southeast of England and 33 Greater London boroughs). This element of the research aimed to find out whether there are relevant policies and strategies available locally that support the integration process of migrants in general and migrant women in particular and how these are arrived at. Despite the fact that this was an exhaustive and substantial piece of work, there is little to retain here as the research found no coherent policies or strategies in any of the local authorities that were examined. When there are some relevant issues mentioned within the documents in the different local authorities, they were found in social cohesion documents, equalities documents, sometimes migration policies or just in documents that discuss demographic figures of the local area.

Very few local authorities had strategies or policies on migration or migrants, let alone migrant women. Others conflate migration issues with ethnic minority or equality policies and strategies. Some others focus mainly on social cohesion and not necessarily integration of new migrants. There were many local authorities that just mention the provision of translation and interpreting services in different languages which, in most cases, might not even be, accessible to migrant women on spousal/partner visas. To track changes in demographics in their local area, many local authorities use school databases to determine how many different languages are spoken in households. Some also reference the general census information. This information, however, is seldom used to assess the needs of community groups and provide appropriate services. There is no analysis or plan to perhaps support the

parents of the children, especially mothers with language and other issues, to help them integrate into life in the UK.

Although language has been identified as the major challenge for many migrants, within the local authorities' documents that were researched, there is little said as to what actions are being taken to mitigate the problem. In a few cases it is actually reported that reduced funding for English language courses is making it hard to provide affordable services. It has also been noted that subsidised services, such as those funded by the Skills Funding Agency are not accessible to migrant women who are on spousal or partner visas, as the eligibility criteria include having residency of at least three years and being on benefits. Worryingly, some local authorities actively discourage having specialist services for migrant women or other ethnic minority women claiming that it will create 'a parallel structure and competition to existing funding'⁵. Such misapplications of equality principles have been successfully challenged in court (Whitfield, 2008).

No local authority was identified which had a policy or strategy, specifically pertaining to migrant women, although some documents do identify the particular needs of migrant women and/or make reference to gender specific provisions. In general, when a local authority has some documents relevant to migrants there is a tendency either to focus on specific groups of migrants; such as refugees, asylum seekers, workers or those migrants coming from certain parts of the world.

Where a rather more proactive and targeted approach from the local authority was identified - whether it was a policy, a piece of research or a commissioned or funded project – it is discussed in the good practice section of this report (p87).

⁵ Quoted in a local authority 'Community Cohesion and Integration Strategy Progress Report'

Chapter 2: Research methodology

“**SETTLING IN**” - Understanding the specific needs for integration of third country national women who come to the UK as a spouse or partner of a UK national or a person with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) with a specific focus on Greater London and Southeast of England Region.

The research took place across Greater London and the South East of England between October 2013 and June 2015, with primary research data being gathered between March 2014 and February 2015.

Research participation – the target group and their eligibility criteria

The remit of the research was specific to migrant women who have come to the UK on spousal or partner visas. This target group was selected due to the fact that of those migrants coming to the UK on settlement visas, a very significant proportion are coming on spousal visas and, of these, the majority are women. The researchers' own experience, and the evidence discussed in the literature review, highlighted the fact that there remains a rather stereotyped assumption about who women on spousal visas are. There is also a relative paucity of research into this particular group of women and their needs and experiences. This coincided well with the target of the funder, the European Integration Fund, since the EU had itself identified this as a gap in research and a priority. Consequently, research participants had to meet the following criteria to be eligible to participate:

- TCN migrant women, i.e. those from outside the EU and;
- Migrant women who had arrived in the UK as a spouse or partner of a British national, a person with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), EU national or a work permit holder;
- Migrant women who have not changed their immigration status into British or EU citizenship and;
- Had been living in the UK for less than 10 years.

The researchers were keen to attract participants within these criteria but also from the widest range of geographic and socio-economic backgrounds both in terms of their experiences in their country of origin and their ways of life on arrival in the UK. This is discussed further at profile of sample group.

Research locations

The primary research was conducted across Greater London and the South East. The researchers wished to have a perspective that was not London Centric but given the 20 month period and funding limits, the reach had to be limited to South East England (as defined by EU geographic banding given the funder was EU). The importance of the choice of locations was to see if the research brought up findings that reflect the geographic and demographic differences of capital, urban, rural and coastal locations in women's experiences. Locations were drawn firstly from census figures to ensure that a sufficiently diverse population were present, and also with a view to the geographic, socio-economic and political context of the locality. In some cases, original plans were amended due to practical considerations. Research locations were thus London, Woking, Oxford, Hastings, High Wycombe, Sandhurst, Maidstone, Slough, Southampton, Kingston, Thanet, Crawley and Milton Keynes.⁶

Research Questions:

- What do TCN women coming to the UK on Spouse/Partner visas understand by the term "Integration"?
- What are the barriers to "Integration" experienced by this group?
- What are the factors, internal or external, that could facilitate "Integration" for this group?
- What policy measures are in place and to what effect as experienced by this group, and what might the recommendations be for improvement or examples to replicate?

Methodology

The research took a mixed methodological approach (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002) incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers wished to gather quantifiable data that could be statistically analysed, whilst also probing further with qualitative methods to gain a greater insight into the context of the answer. The use of a mixed method approach can provide a better understanding of the research problems at hand and has the advantage of combining the reliability of empirical counts in quantitative data with the validity of lived experience and perception in qualitative data (Ahlberg and Wheeldon, 2012).

⁶ In some cases, these locations differed slightly from the original research proposal. This arose both from the need to conduct more and smaller focus groups and from barriers in recruiting and accessing women or availability and capacity of support organisations..

It involved:

- A desk based review of various academic and policy literature relating to integration and migration in general and women in particular;
- Primary research in the form of 24 focus group meetings with 86 women and 10 in-depth interviews with Third Country National (TCN) women⁷;
- Primary research in the form of 40 semi-structured interviews with NGO support services, Local Authority officers and Academics working in the field;
- A review of all Greater London and South East Local Authority policy documentation relating directly or tangentially to the subject area and target group.

The research team consisted of all female workers as well as female interpreters. A number of researchers suggest benefits arising from same sex researchers and participants, with Oakley (1981) for example arguing that female participants respond more freely and openly to a female interviewer. Similarly, Reinharz (1992:19) suggests that women interviewing women 'is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women'.

Recruitment of the target group

Due to the specific, identified target group, a purposive sampling method was used. Two flyers were created to recruit the target group and were circulated widely with the assistance of various statutory and voluntary organisations already in contact with migrant women. There were then numerous emails and phone-calls to explain the research and encourage support organisations to help promote it to service users.

It was necessary to work very closely with these organisations to identify and recruit eligible women to take part. In order to satisfy EU Audit standards, it was necessary to take copies of visas to demonstrate eligibility. This is to demand a huge level of trust from both participants and support organisations. In order to establish this rapport, the research team often added in additional visits to services prior to the focus group meeting to introduce the project and build trust.

Focus groups and one-to-one interviews with women

The focus group meetings either took place at the support services that women were already accessing or in a few cases at Eaves' office (a women-only space usually for women survivors of violence). On average, it involved three or four women, lasted around two and a half hours and consisted of two parts. The first half involved a one-to-one questionnaire to

⁷ The initial proposal was 10 focus groups averaging 8 participants, however in practice it proved too difficult to find 8 women in one area meeting eligibility criteria and simultaneously available for a meeting.

collect quantitative data with questions based around employment, education, housing, accessing services and social life. The second half of the focus group meeting consisted of several open ended questions aimed to provoke discussion around subjects such as the expectations they had when they came to the UK, unexpected issues, ways they are trying to adapt, key challenges they face and how they define integration. The one-to-one, semi-structured interview (with ten women) covered similar topics to the focus group but in more depth.

Every woman who participated in the focus group and the one-to-one interviews received travel costs and a £10 retail voucher to thank them for their time and contribution to the report. Refreshments were provided and the project also covered the costs of crèche facilities and interpretation.

Interviews with other stakeholders

Consultation meetings were held with 40 stakeholders from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and academics in the form of a semi structured interview. These were held across Greater London and the South East of England from February 2014 to December 2014, and with academics in May 2015. The interviews with Local Authorities and voluntary sector covered topics around local policies and initiatives on migration and integration; how are migrant women's needs assessed, they see as the biggest challenges; and how they mitigate those effects. The meetings with academics at a later stage in the project shared initial findings to compare them with the current state of knowledge. Additional insight was drawn from the value of the findings, suggestions for further research and recommendations. The topic guides acted mainly as a set of pointers to allow flexibility, depending on the background and speciality of the stakeholder.

Literature review and policy, including local authority policy review

A literature review of academic and national government and EU publications relating specifically to women or gender and migration and integration was undertaken. A desk based review of local authority policies in 33 Greater London and 62 Southeast England local authorities was also undertaken to analyse all current council policies and strategies relating to migration and integration, in particular relating to migrant women.

Sample profile

The research participants come from a wide range of geographic and socio-economic backgrounds. This was important to the research as an over-concentration on women from a particular background can disproportionately highlight barriers specific to that group. Their ages range from 21 – 67 with the average age of 37. This average was influenced by one of the focus groups conducted with 12 older migrant women between the age of 50 and 67; with

eight of them being over the age of 60. Without this group, the average age of the research participants is 24.

Research participants come from 32 different countries with the highest proportion being from Pakistan (14 percent) and Nepal (14 percent)⁸ followed by Afghanistan (eight percent) and Bangladesh (eight percent). However, the sample includes women from North and South America and EA countries. All of the women have arrived on a spousal visa. Ninety percent of the women are married to a British National or ILR holder, five percent are married to EEA nationals and five percent are married to work permit holders and 88 percent got married outside the UK. The majority of participants are in heterosexual relationships with one participant being in a same sex relationship. A large proportion (58.14 percent) states that joining their partner in the UK was the main reason for their migration. Of those participating in the research, 48 percent have children mostly born in the UK after marriage (though some prior to arrival).

In terms of educational history, 91.86 percent of the women in the sample had been in formal education prior to their arrival in the UK. As many as 58.23 percent have graduate and post-graduate level qualifications in various fields. Some have multiple first and second degrees from their countries of origin, and/or different parts of the world.

The duration of the UK stay at time of interview varied from two months to nine years, with the vast majority of participants arriving in the last 4 years.

Figure 1: Participants' duration of stay in the UK

Duration of UK stay at time of interview	Number of participants
0 – 24 months	47
25– 48 months	21
49 – 72 months	11
73 – 96 months	4
97 + months	3

The previous education and employment history of the women varies significantly. Some had lived in the UK previously as a student or had visited on holiday prior to coming to live here. Some of the women had lived and worked in other countries besides the UK and their country of origin. Some already had friends or extended family prior to their arrival; several had only their spouse and the spouse's family.

⁸ The proportion of women from Nepal is slightly higher due to one focus group being conducted exclusively with 12 Nepalese women of older age.

Figure 2: Countries of origin of research participants

Country	Percentage of participants	Country	Percentage of participants
Afghanistan	8%	Nepal	14%
Albania	1%	Nigeria	2%
Algeria	6%	Pakistan	14%
Bangladesh	8%	Russia	1%
Brazil	2%	Saudi Arabia	1%
China	2%	Senegal	1%
Colombia	1%	South Korea	1%
Georgia	1%	Sri Lanka	2%
India	6%	Sudan	3%
Iran	1%	Syria	1%
Iraq	1%	Thailand	3%
Kosovo	1%	Turkey	3%
Kyrgyzstan	1%	USA	2%
Lebanon	1%	Uzbekistan	1%
Mexico	1%	Venezuela	1%
Morocco	2%	Yemen	1%

Data analysis

All interviews and focus group meetings were transcribed and anonymised. Following that, a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was undertaken, identifying the key themes and issues raised by the research participants. All quantitative data gathered from the one to one questionnaires was entered into SPSS using a coding dictionary developed for this project and organised by key themes.

Ethical considerations

Throughout the research, from the initial planning to the final dissemination events, every effort was made to uphold high ethical standards. An external advisory group was appointed and five meetings were held over the course of the project, they provided expert knowledge, advice and guidance highlighting any ethical considerations.

All support projects were provided with detailed information about Eaves and the project at an early stage. Women gave their informed consent to participate and for the interviews to be recorded and were made aware that they could withdraw at any time.

At the start of every focus group and interview the lead researcher would provide information on Eaves, the aims of the research and how it would be used. She also made it clear to participants that they were welcome to have copies of the research, attend dissemination events and speak at such events if they wished, but that there was no expectation or obligation on them to do so. It was also explained how their information and data would be anonymised and stored securely and confidentially, and who would have access to the information. This was of critical importance given that the funders' eligibility and audit conditions required researchers to take and store copies of visa information. As insecure immigration status is a key concern, it was essential to provide the rationale for taking a copy of their passports/visas and to reassure women that copies are stored in locked cabinets with restricted access and not forwarded to Home office or other agencies. Women then had the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the project and the interview process. Only then, if they were happy with the information, would they be asked to sign the informed consent form.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations that need to be considered when reading the findings and conclusions of this report.

Sample

The research relied on a purposive sampling method and as such should not be taken as representative. The target group for the research, though so diverse in many ways, was in other ways very narrowly defined in the eligibility criteria thereby excluding many equally valid experiences. Due to the complexities of recruiting participants and building trust, as outlined below, the sample almost exclusively involved women who were already engaged with services.

The research team had to rely heavily on the good nature, interest and capacity of such organisations to help recruit eligible participants. As a result, a significant proportion of the organisations that engaged with the project were funded by the same source (European Integration Fund) and are disproportionately English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course providers so this could have an impact on the findings. It would be common for ESOL participants to be prioritising language as their principle barrier to integration. It may also be common for ESOL and citizenship class participants to be relatively newly arrived which can be pertinent in women's sense of integration.

One-off interview

Another limitation to consider is that interviews with the target group were only conducted once. This is common to many research projects but of course “integration” is a process and women may experience different challenges and feelings about the process at different stages. As a one-off interview, this research can only act as a snapshot study of where each woman was on their integration journey at the time of their interview. It is a recommendation of this research that longitudinal studies are conducted with a similar sample group.

Interpretation

A more substantive challenge (Edwards, 1998) to consider is that twenty-four of the women who participated in the research needed to use interpreters as they had a low level of English language proficiency.

There is not space here to go into the detail of the arguments concerning the use of interpreters in qualitative research, these are well covered by (Squires, 2009) and (Berman and Tyyka 2011) amongst others. However, there is still surprisingly rather little research into this area (Murray C.J. & Wynne J. 2001) despite the increasing value placed on accessing “hidden voices” or “hard to reach” communities (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1987, Ghuman 1994).

However, there are number of points worth considering. The research team only used qualified professional and female interpreters familiar with both English and the language of the participant (Westermeyer 1990). This meant that interpreters were not known to the participant, had good command of both languages and consequently often had some understanding of the cultural norms of the participants which is often thought desirable (Freed 1988). However, as has been noted, (Phelan and Parkman 1995, Murray C.D. & Wynne J. 2001, Rana 1998), this may still present challenges. For instance, a shared cultural heritage and in some cases gender, as here, could inhibit a participant if they feel judged by the interpreter, or are concerned about confidentiality.

In addition it is important to consider the role of the interpreter at every stage of the process (Squires, 2009). With this in mind the research team briefed interpreters about the research and the confidentiality requirements, and provided copies of the semi-structured interviews in advance as far as possible. Interpreters were aware that sessions were recorded, whilst there was not capacity to independently verify the quality or accuracy of translations, the very fact of interpreters being aware of the recording could assist in maximising their attempted accuracy. Participants were informed that professional and independent female interpreters would be provided and that they would be bound by confidentiality principles. At the time of interview or focus group it would be made clear to the participants who was the interpreter and what their role would be.

Consecutive interpretation was used and, as far as possible, the researcher tried not to be directive or intrusive in that process. However, there were still rare occasions where an interpreter and participant appeared to have quite a long discussion, but the interpreter summarised with considerable brevity. There were also examples where an interpreter switched between I and She when reporting participants' contributions. Where such incidents occurred the researcher would probe further and seek clarification. As has been noted (Mehra B. 2002). we all have our own unconscious bias and seek to be aware of it and to overcome it. This applies equally to interpreters and it has been noted (Westermeyer 1990, Brafman 1995) that there is a risk that an interpreter when selecting how to summarise a response may make their own judgements on what is important and can in some cases bring personal motives such as a perception about protecting the honour of their community.

A final point to consider is that many of the terms involved in this research do not have clear or consistent definitions and given the aim of the research – to hear women's own voices – this results in responses and interpretations which are necessarily subjective. Women interpreted the questions in their own way and decided what the words meant to them; for example, were they asked to self-assess their language proficiency; what they think a "friend" is, and if they think they have friends in the UK, what "belongingness" means to them; what "integration" means to them; and what would job or neighbourhood "satisfaction" meant to them.

This research uses the quotes of the women participants verbatim. The researchers are aware that there are differing views about the use of quotes, especially when the participants may not be native-English speakers, but in this instance the research was seeking to amplify migrants' own voices which are rarely heard in these discussions. In addition it is hoped that this research may help inform policy makers. Some studies (Corden & Sainsbury 2006) have suggested that quotes can be very helpful to bring policy makers nearer to the subjects of their measures. For these reasons, the research team chose to make extensive use of quotes.

Chapter 3: Findings Part I

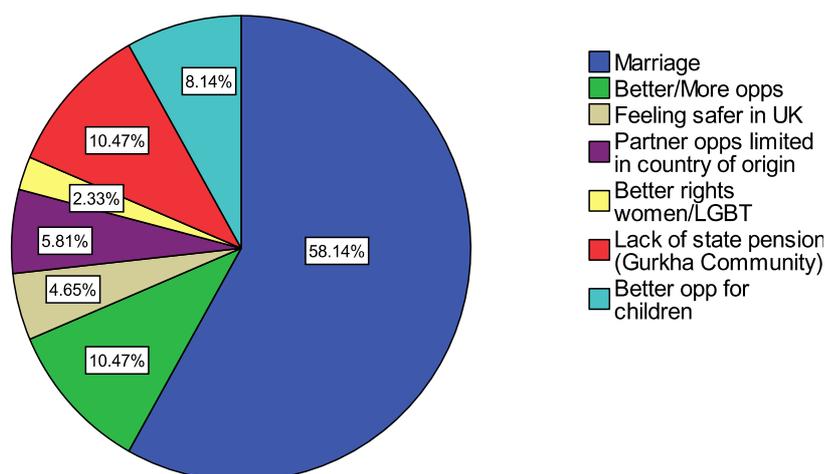
The findings are divided into two sections. The first section draws more heavily on the one-to-one interviews that were designed to capture some quantitative data as well as the words of the women.

The second section at p90 provides a flavour of the discussions that took place in the focus groups. This section looks at some of the more abstract concepts and captures a range of women's views about them. In particular this covers issues such as gender and integration.

Issues considered when deciding to migrate

The migrant women in this sample, for the most part (58.14 percent) reported that they came to the UK on their spousal or partner visa to join their spouses or partner; however, women and their family may also consider a range of additional factors when they decide to migrate to the UK. In this sample, these factors include anticipating better or more opportunities in the UK for themselves and their children and the fact that there had been limited opportunities for their spouse or partner in their country of origin or other countries in which they had resided. One of the research participants said, "One of the reasons we came over is because education is better for the children, quality of life for the children will also be better here. I also wanted to explore work opportunities in England".

Figure 3: Issues considered when deciding to migrate



Another woman said that they had tried to live with her British husband in her country of origin but it was very 'difficult for him to find a job' and they decided to move to the UK. They were also concerned for his safety. She said, "We tried living in Venezuela but the situation there is getting unsafe, especially for my husband as he doesn't speak Spanish and looks different with his blue eyes".

Some women had clearly sacrificed their own opportunities in order to facilitate their husband's career development.

In one of the focus groups conducted, there were older participants from the Nepalese community who joined their spouses for a specific reason, which might not necessarily apply to the vast majority of migrant women on spousal visas. In this particular case, the main factor for the decision to migrate was the lack of equal pension rights for the

“My husband couldn't find a job in Sweden when we used to live there. He came and tried to live there as I didn't want to leave Sweden. I could have had my further education and a better life there as the system is better...”

husbands who fought as British soldiers for many years. Out of the twelve Nepalese women who were interviewed in the focus group, all except two said the reason for migration at their more advanced age was because of the lack of equal treatment their spouses faced when it came to pension payments. One woman said, “My husband was a soldier before and worked all his life, he was separated from his family all his life working as a soldier and when it came to old age and settling in he wasn't given enough pension to settle in Nepal and to support the family so we came to the UK”.

Key barriers to integration identified in findings

3.1 Employment

3.1.1 Eagerness to find work

Although 56.96 percent of the migrant women who participated in the research were in employment before coming to the UK, only 41.86 percent are now in some form of employment or voluntary work. Of those who participated in the focus groups, 43 percent did not work before or after coming to the UK, 42 percent did work before and after coming to the UK and 15 percent were in employment before coming to the UK, but have not been able to work since.

Despite the difference in employment history, the vast majority of women involved in the research want to work and support their families. One woman who used to work in a very male dominated construction industry in her country of origin said, “When I was working in Turkey I was working among 800 men, but at the moment I wouldn't get this chance anymore. I like this country and I would like to stay in this country and I'll try to pursue my career if I can. I don't want to be burden on the social security, I just want to work and earn my own.”

“For me, to be honest, I need to find work, firstly because of the money, to be honest with you, not because I love money but because to be able to live a good life because I am not used to live a bad life, so, I just want to live... comfortable life, you know. Secondly, I want to get to know people, to have relations with, to be social, and to learn new things. I don't want to waste my time doing nothing,... So, I want to be confident, to work, to improve myself, to learn something new, I don't want to rely on my husband for everything, and I just want to do my things by myself.”

The vast majority of the women who were interviewed in the research recognise that to lead a comfortable and independent life in the UK, to have a fulfilling social life and to integrate they need to be in employment.

Figure 4: Employment before coming to the UK

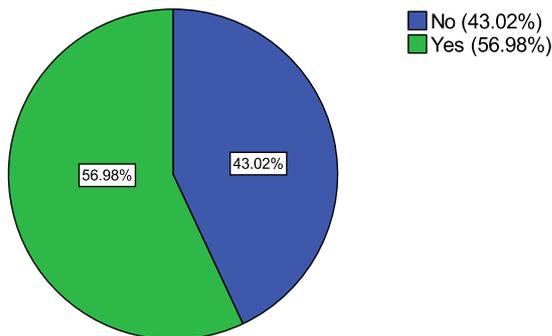
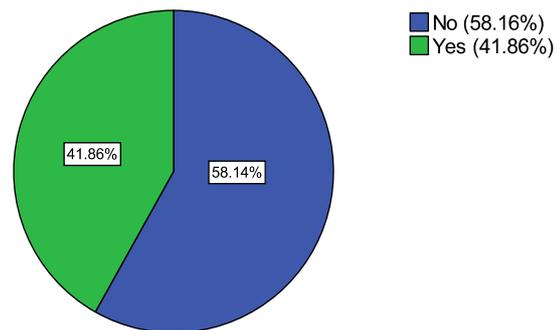


Figure 5: Employment secured in the UK



3.1.2 Barriers to employment

Various issues were identified by the migrant women who participated in the research as barriers for getting into employment. Although some of the women cited one or two reasons for their unemployment, in most cases women were facing multiple barriers in their search for employment.

3.1.2. (a) Language

One of the main reasons for unemployment amongst the participants, who were not in employment or in a volunteering role, was lack of proficiency in the English language (34.5 percent). Even though English language is a problem for many, it does not mean women can afford to wait to start work only once their language improves. They need to earn and

improve their language at the same time as described by one woman, who had been to a few interviews but met with no success: “Because maybe my English isn’t fluent, so that’s why they are saying to me, it’s better to go improve my English and apply for a job. So, I don’t know what to do now, because I need of course the language, but London is expensive and life is not easy here, even my husband is an engineer but it’s not enough for us, I have to help him.”

“I have very bad experience, two years ago, I got a job in an airport duty free shop at that time my language is not very good, but I passed at interview. But when I was working the people at airport, you know from different countries, they got different accent I couldn’t understand, I often ask another colleague for help, ‘what did they say?’ ‘What did she say?’ and they got annoyed and complained to the manager and also one customer complained to the manager. One customer I can remember very clearly, she said ‘she shouldn’t be here she can’t understand English’. That made me very very sad and so only after one week I was sacked.”

3.1.2. (b) Lack of employment opportunities

In 23 percent of cases where women are not in employment or volunteering roles, the reported reason behind it has been that women simply could not find a job even though they might not necessarily have a language problem. Many said that the lack of jobs had been the main surprise and ‘shock’ they encountered when they started living in the UK. For some, this has been going on not for months but for years.

It was very common to hear statements such as, “I have been looking for a job but couldn’t find one”, “I am currently looking for a job and have not been able to find anything” and “Hard to find paid employment, looked around a lot but not been able to find anything”.

Many women said they have been very active in applying for jobs with no success. One woman said, “I was serious and applying online many CVs and going to shop by myself and ask for a job. I go online and I search for jobs, and I fill out a lot of forms, different forms, but they didn’t even email or call. They do not get back to you. It’s really horrible.”

Some of the women are not even looking for jobs relevant to their profession or qualification; many are looking for any kind of job to start with. One woman said, “I have a degree in accountancy but I am not applying for high position, that’s what is annoying me, I am applying for easy or simple position like sales assistant or receptionist and even so, I am not getting it.”

Some women considered that this may be linked to prejudice by the settled community including employers, regarding the capability of migrant women and their qualifications.

Others highlighted that there are women with very high skills levels and instead of wasting this talent, a more organised and cost effective approach may be to integrate a skills match element in employment agencies. “I came from a sport coaching background and my friend came with a background of masters in music for example. There are lots of expert that they can use their skills. If, for example, there was an agency for these people, these foreign women, where they can go and show their qualification and skills and the agency can find them a job”.

3.1.2. (c) Caring responsibilities

Child care and sometimes the care for elderly relatives were also identified as barriers for employment. Some 11.5 percent of those research participants who are not currently working said the main reason for their unemployment is care responsibilities. Interestingly though, of the participants who have children, 48 percent (of the total sample) were nevertheless in employment or volunteering roles when they participated in the research. Only 12 percent of the women with children who participated in the research were not in employment or volunteering roles.

“I have responsibility for a lot of people, like my uncle, auntie, my mother-in-law, my husband and my three children. They are quite old; my mother-in-law is nearly eighty, and my uncle, so since three months they are in the bed ... because in the morning I get up seven o’clock and until twelve o’clock at night I am working, all the time I am busy.”

In relation to child care responsibility, some migrant women described the lack of affordable childcare as a “bad investment”. It should also be noted that even where some free childcare is provided, many women on spousal visas are subject to the no recourse to public funds rule and therefore could not benefit from it anyway.

Migrant women stated that child care is too expensive such that some women with children do not even think it is an option when planning to join or rejoin employment. This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the women with children also do not have any social support system around them like family and friends on whom they could rely.

Others have care responsibilities not only to their children but also to extended family members.

3.1.2. (d) Lack of information and support around finding employment

Some 6.9 percent of the unemployed women who participated in the focus groups said that one of the main reasons for their unemployment is the lack of support and information available around finding jobs in the UK. They are aware that the job market and the system is quite different from what they are used to in their country of origin or other places, but they

do not have any information on where to go to or where to start. One woman said, “It is difficult to find good job, I mean not even a good job. Because we don’t know how to – where we go, where we find, which way, yeah.”

Lacking the necessary contacts in the UK to get their feet into the job market, they feel ‘lost’. For many women who had an extensive social circle and contacts in their country of origin it’s quite difficult to come to the UK and start from scratch. One woman said, “So in Bangladesh I know I have a platform, I have contacts, but here I don’t really have that. I have to start from scratch, that’s exactly what it is.” Another said, “I was completely lonely and lost. Basically, because I had my job Columbia, you know I gave up everything of my life in my country, and I was lost. I didn’t get any support, just from my husband and my parents-in-law.”

Some actually have tried to seek information from Jobcentre Plus (JCP) offices but the majority, especially those with no recourse to public funds had a negative experience or feel that staff at the JCP were not helpful. One woman said, “I went to job centre plus before I get my indefinite leave to remain. I asked them several times that I need someone to have a look at my CV. I need someone to work on my interview. They didn’t help me a lot. They just give me some brochure and didn’t help me”.

Similarly, one woman said, “Friend told me to go to Jobcentre Plus and they asked if I am on benefits and said their service is only for people on benefits”., I said, “Ok, if everything is ok, is going on well, I’m going to be probably British or probably a mother of British citizens in the future. So, I found it really unfair – there was not any support.”

Even those who are accessing public funds feel that JCP staff are not very helpful trying to help them into employment. One woman said, “When I went to job centre to ask the lady that make me sign, I ask her ‘what kind of job is there available for me- if I want to apply and then get it immediately now’, she said ‘I’m not allowed to tell you’. Job centre do not provide information they hide information. ‘So you’re here just sitting to ask me why you didn’t try to get a job?’ You know they hire lots of people and they are in a big building, lots of staff there for unemployed people but they are impractical in real life they don’t help us to find the job, they ask us okay you go online and search you stuff online.”

Many of the women who participated in this research believe that it could make a considerable amount of difference in their job search if they could access some help and information, around CV writing, interview skills and successful applications. One woman who received some help from the language school she was attending said that it was really helpful. “They were like teaching me how to write a CV and everything and I wrote like ‘I don’t have much experience, work experience, I just interned’. So the person who was reviewing my CV at the college said that, ‘you know, don’t undersell yourself, you have work experience”. Some women also mentioned the cultural difference in terms of how they

approach potential employers. Some find it difficult to ‘sell’ their skills and experience convincingly as they are wary of coming across as over-confident and arrogant.

3.1.2. (e) Job relevant to qualification

“I’m a lawyer I have seven years experience, I have a Masters degree. ..knowing that I know how to do things, administer things, handle people or working with teams of people, I’m really good, but because I come from Mexico and because my qualifications are from Mexico they don’t trust that. It’s, you know, it’s just insane.”

Around 3.4 percent of the women who are not working attributed their unemployment to not finding a job relevant to their own qualification or profession. The fact that only 3.4 percent raised this as a barrier for employment seems to reflect the finding that many of the women who participated in the research actually go for any job for a start and do not insist on finding a job specific to their own qualification.

Some women are also worried about the gaps in their CVs and if that could potentially jeopardise their careers. “I mean talking about the gaps in employment, you know, when an employer is reading your CV, they can’t imagine your situation, of course. I was a volunteer that’s like a work experience it’s like, yeah...But employers are going to say like are you a volunteer for three years or more? Like, why?...”

For many women who are used to working and contributing and have good quality qualifications and years of experience, it is very difficult to comprehend why they are not able to find a job specific to their qualification.

3.1.2. (f) Work experience outside the UK undervalued

One of the frequently mentioned reasons for unemployment amongst the research participants was the fact that UK employers do not recognise the wealth of experience women bring from their respective countries of origin and insist on UK experience. It was not uncommon for some of the migrant women participating in this research to feel that this is a huge barrier, even insurmountable, as without the opportunity of having UK experience it could be impossible for women to enter employment.

One participant said, “When you looking for a job, the first question is, ‘you have any experience in UK?’ Many women realise that they may have to start with voluntary work despite their qualifications and they are prepared to do so, but they face the same barrier, as one woman said, “But when we go out for getting experience, they say, ‘you should do some voluntary work’ – but they don’t give us voluntary work. If nobody will give us voluntary work, how can we get experience?”

Another said, “They don’t take into account any experience that you have abroad, it does not count and that’s very very difficult.” For many this makes them feel, whatever their qualification, whatever their experience, they are forced to start from scratch. One woman said, “I felt as if I was 18 years old, it means like, you have the right to work but people or employers treat you as if you had just finished high school.”

3.1.2. (g) Prejudice

Attempting to rationalise the extreme negativity that women experienced towards their overseas qualifications and experience, women sometimes concluded that there must be a degree of prejudice from the settled community and employers about migrant women in general and those coming from certain parts of the world, which could negatively impact on their chances of employment.

One woman said, “They have an idea, I don’t understand why, the Arabic people or the Somalian, they came just here to be on benefit. I came here and I want to work, I have been in Morocco ten years accountant, I want to continue my life here to work, I don’t need money from the Government and my husband pay his taxes. Unfortunately because they have one or two cases they generalise.”

After extensive and unsuccessful job-searches, one woman said she was wondering if she should have changed her last name to her British husband’s name. She feels that her ‘non-British’ sounding name might be the cause of her unemployment.

Other women feel that the fact that their spousal visa has an expiry date puts some employers off employing them. They understand that not all employers know what the different visas mean and what work entitlements the different visas grant. A research participant said, “People see the two years spousal visa and say that they need a longer visa. They say that I have a visa that expires, that is a problem.” The migrant women who participated in this research feel the Government and policy makers need to highlight proactively to companies that they need to be open to migrant women who have the right to work and possibly support them in understanding what different visas mean.

Some women feel that there is particular prejudice against migrant women from specific countries; particularly countries outside Europe or those countries where the UK has no historical ties. One woman from Mexico said, “I didn’t realise the difference in prejudice in UK, because not only are we migrants, we don’t come from former colonies, so there is no, ‘Oh, so sorry, we did bad things to you people, so we’re going to be a bit more lenient, there is nothing like that”.

Another woman made a similar observation, “I am not very fluent in English so when at times I didn’t understand something, they react. But I don’t think the problem is not language, I have lots of friends from Spain, from Italy, their language is really bad and they find job really

easily, they are really welcome here, they are. I was surprised.” Another woman who wears a headscarf said, “Once they know that we are Arab it’s a different story, if we go together to an interview, they will take her, and they will not take me,” [Referring to a woman who does not wear a headscarf].

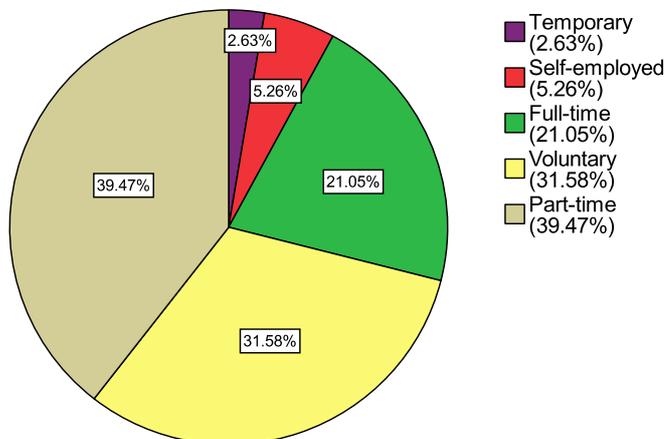
A Colombian woman stressed how she was first shocked that her interviewer did not even know where Columbia was and then made a remark that she felt was both sexist and racist about how “handy” it was that she had managed to find and marry a British man.

Many participants felt that there was a prejudice against migrants for whom English was not a first language – irrespective of how well or not the migrant actually spoke the language. One participant recounted that, “One of the reasons why I won’t be taken for a job, I have been told straight away, is because I’m not a native speaker. I applied for a position where I worked actually for six months and I haven’t even been shortlisted. I felt really sad and then I learned from my supervisor that they’ve hired and wanted someone who is a native speaker”.

3.1.3 Type of employment

The majority (71 percent) of those who participated in this research and are working, are employed either on a part-time basis (39.46 percent) or in voluntary (31.58 percent) jobs.

Figure 6: Types of employment



Only 52.78 percent say they are “satisfied” with their employment or voluntary work. Most raise the issue of payment as the reason for their full or partial dissatisfaction. Although they do understand that they need to obtain UK experience and be active in undertaking different jobs and volunteering work, many feel that they need to find paid employment and also employment that befits their qualification.

Even the women who said they are satisfied with their volunteering mostly say that they would prefer a paying role. One woman, expressing relative satisfaction with her voluntary

role, said, “Yes, even though I will like a paid job. Without experience you cannot do anything here and the working style is very different so I am happy that am doing the voluntary work.” Another said, “I volunteer for the experience as I need a UK experience. I am also looking for a paid job.”

For women who would like to go into full-time employment some of the part-time roles are ‘extremely part-time’ as one woman puts it. She said she works two hours a week and is paid very little; £20 teaching kids after school. One woman said, “I’m not happy when I realise at the end of the month I’ve earned less money than I have to earn to pay for things.”

Other women associate earning with being independent and attach high importance to this in their settling in or integration process. One woman said, “I want a non-volunteering job, I need a paid work. I was an independent woman in Pakistan and I want my independence - I like the independence I had before”. Others point out the potential danger of being completely dependent on someone else financially. One woman said, “It’s a dangerous situation, always a dangerous situation. You are totally depending on this person, you get very lucky, you have good life, you have a good husband, treats you well, but if it goes bad...”. Another woman used the term “economic vulnerability” to sum up this situation. “If you have no job, whether your husband is earning good money or not, economically you are very vulnerable. You have to look for what you're given...If the husband doesn't give you then you have nothing”.

A further reason for dissatisfaction relates to the above section concerning under-employment or employment that doesn’t match their qualifications and experience. One woman said, “I am satisfied to a degree about 70%, the money is not enough. I am not being remunerated for the years of experience and qualification that I have. I earned more in Nigeria.” Another said, “It’s not my profession, what I have been trained to do. The money is very little.”

Other women feel that employers are using the desperation of women to exploit them. One professional woman who has a masters in the UK said, “I feel there are a lot of exploitative employers out there. In one organisation not only was I not being reimbursed for travel and lunch I was told that one of my tasks as a legal volunteer is to be collecting the rubbish of the office... And with another organisation, apparently I got the volunteering because I had a legal background, but all I was doing was heavy, admin stuff; making photocopies, physically exhausting and not intellectually stimulating...”

“Actually, I sometimes feel like I’m getting sick but I think it’s the stress that I have, the back pain, you start developing these weird things...I have the pressure, even though sometimes I’m not so aware, but my body is telling me, and I know.”

The pressure of unemployment or under-employment has physical and psychological repercussions for many women which could escalate into more long term problems that are costly to the public purse.

3.1.4 Volunteering

The research findings show that a considerable amount of migrant women on spousal and partner visas do take part in volunteering work. This was equally true of those who arrived recently in the UK and those who have been in the country for some years. The migrant women participating in this research who are involved in volunteering roles, had been living in the UK from three months to four years. Women who are involved in volunteering activities also came from a range of countries and regions; as many as 43 percent were from Pakistan, nine percent from India and eight percent each from Afghanistan, Algeria, Lebanon, Mexico, Thailand and Venezuela. Despite some unfounded claims that migrant women do not do volunteering work, 31.58 percent of participants in the research were doing some kind of volunteering work at the time of the interview and many more have at some point been involved in volunteering work in the UK. Migrant women do realise that volunteering opens doors for them in terms of other opportunities, socialising with people and also accessing general information around life in the UK.

One woman shared her experience of the rewards of volunteering. She said, "I decided to volunteer, it's a way to meet people and spend your time instead of being at home... You are out there, you are meeting people, you are perhaps telling people you are looking for work, and something, you know, will come up. ...actually here I'm doing something and I feel like, you know, I have things to do, and I think that is also very important, where you can show your abilities and where you can feel like you're doing something nice."

However, many women stress that volunteering should be a means to an end and not an end in itself and needs to guard against the potential for exploitation as outlined previously. Several women point out that not every volunteering experience in the UK is relevant. One woman who is an accountant and has worked in her country for many years is puzzled as to why she should be expected to volunteer in a store stocking shelves. She said, "So, if the person is an accountant, they need experience in accounting not in shelf stocking, not in a supermarket".

Another woman felt that volunteering should not be unlimited, "It is good but be volunteer, but for short time. You can be volunteer for two or three months after that, in my opinion, they have to help, they must help you to find a job, because you spent your time free for them...."

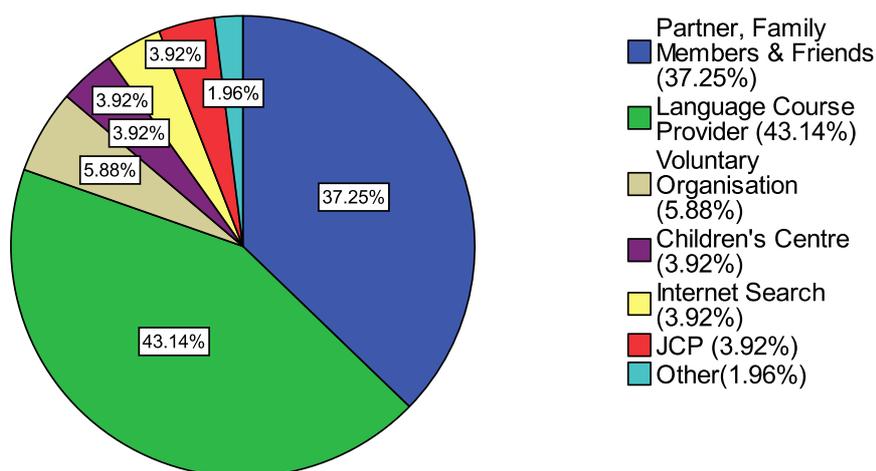
Women also point out that although they are prepared to volunteer, they still face barriers to take up volunteering. Some employers are not even giving women opportunities as volunteers because of assumptions about their language or visa status. In addition, as indicated elsewhere, the lack of free childcare or the fact that they are unable to take up free

childcare as they are subject to the no recourse to public funds requirement, makes volunteering impossible for some. As one stated, “if I am volunteering, who will look after my children? Nobody. So I have to pay for nursery and work for free?”

3.1.5 Career advice and information

Women were asked if they have ever been given any advice or information around employment, such as how to do job searches, how to write their CVs and how to prepare for interviews. The majority (51.2 percent) said that they had not been given any advice or information. Besides, of the 48.8 percent who said they did receive advice or information, very few actually obtained the information from formal sources. Thirty-seven percent of the 48.8 percent obtained the information from their partners, friends or other relatives. Forty-three percent of the 48.8 percent accessed some information from the language schools they were attending and others either found some information from the internet, children centres or voluntary organisations they had accessed.

Figure 7: Career advice provider



Since most of the information migrant women obtain comes from informal sources, such as, their friends and families, many feel that the advice they receive has not been really helpful. Some actually say that they have been misinformed or given the wrong information from different sources. Others resort to the internet to access information. One woman who has been to a Language Show Event said the information she received there was not very helpful because it is too basic and says that there is a need for more tailored advice. She said, “There is a real need for a specialist service for migrant women to help with this”.

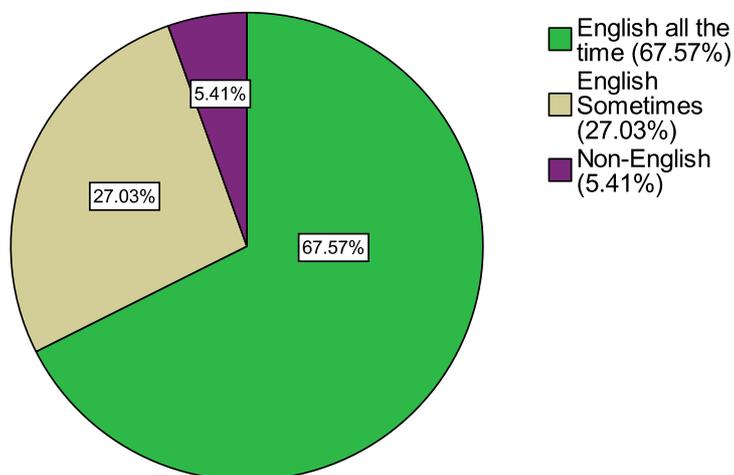
Another woman who attended an event organised by her English language college said, “Last year a person from the National Career Advice came and spoke at the college I study English but it was very general”. Similarly another research participant said, “Although the information from college was useful, I relied mostly on the internet research I did before I came to the UK”. Another said, “The advice provided in the college was not helpful. At the

start they did help with CV but I needed to convert my qualification and want to go to university and they weren't helpful in doing that".

3.1.6 Work colleagues and language

As many of the migrant women who participated in the research, work or volunteer with British colleagues, they recognise that this has created an opportunity for them not only to gain work experience in the UK but also to socialise with people, know the culture and system in the UK and ultimately help them with the integration process. Of the 42.2 percent of the women that said they are working or volunteering, 72.22 percent have British colleagues. Only 27.78 percent have colleagues from their country of origin and 50 percent have colleagues from mixed backgrounds.

Figure 8: Language used at work



The majority of those women who are working (67.57 percent) use English as the only means of communication at their places of work or where they are volunteering. Only 5.41 percent said they do not use English at work and the rest use English and other languages. Some of the women who do not use English at work are in fact using their native language for work reasons – teaching, interpretation and translation.

3.1.7 Positive steps taken by women

In addition to trying different avenues to find work and volunteering, women are trying other means of earning and advancing their career options. One such way is by trying to start their own businesses. A few of the migrant women who participated in the research have already started very promising businesses. One woman said, “When I came here it was very, very difficult; full time I was stay at home for about five months. There is no job, nothing, just cleaning and cooking. Then I start my own clothes sewing business, now I’m very busy. I am busy and happy, because if you are busy, then time easily goes by. If you are free it’s very difficult to live here.”

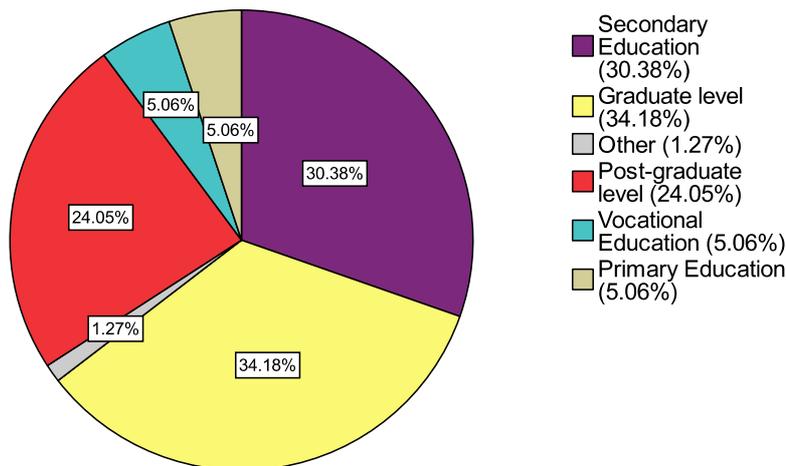
“I was working in a restaurant for one week, just one week, because I couldn’t, you know. I said ‘Yeah, I’m gonna go there, I’m a warrior, I’m going to do whatever’, but no. I’m sorry I can’t. I’ve got other skills, so even if employers don’t want to give me a job, I’m going to get money with the things I know. I’ve got Masters in Latin American literature as well, and I’ve been teacher in my country, so I’m Spanish teacher but in private tuition. I decided just to create a syllabus according to the things I had learnt before, and I offered my service as a Spanish teacher in private tuition and it has been really really nice. Now I’m self employed and it has been like my salvation. I’m also a translator, freelance translator; fortunately I’m getting the money with the things I know how to do.”

Other women take additional courses and try and convert their qualifications or change their qualification to be able to compete in the job market in the UK. However, this option is not always easily accessible to all migrant women as there are various expenses attached to it. One woman who is a qualified and experienced biologist in Algeria was hoping to do some conversion courses to be able to continue with her profession. She said, “It’s too expensive to study at university and to get work it’s very hard. I have experience in my country, and now, one year nothing to do. It’s very hard.”

3.2 Education

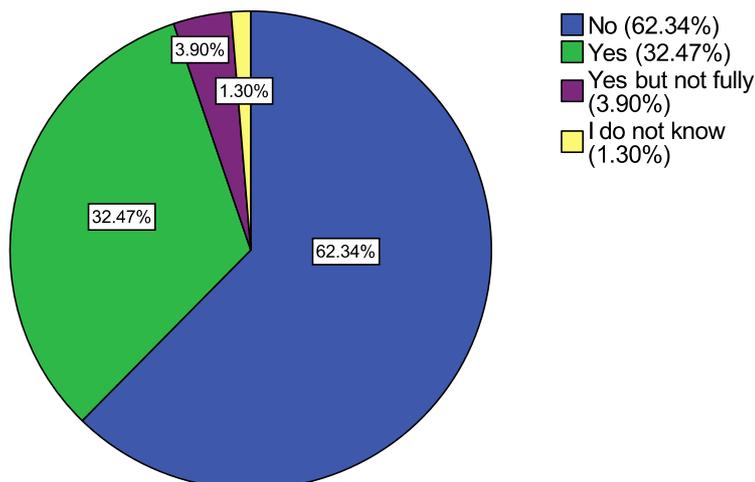
Of the 86 migrant women who participated in the focus groups 91.86 percent have been enrolled in some form of formal education before coming to the UK. The majority (58.23 percent) have graduate and post-graduate level qualifications in various fields. Some have multiple first and second degrees from their countries of origin and different parts of the world.

Figure 9: Highest level of qualification



Despite having such high qualifications, as many as 62.34 percent of the research participants were not able to use their qualification in the UK. This could be either because it was not recognised or it was under-valued. One woman said, “I could only use my qualification for teaching primary education children only, the value of my degree is worthless, it is like I did an A-Level here.” Another said, “My qualification is not recognised here, I would need to convert it which takes time and money and not sure if it would actually be beneficial or not.” Migrant women who participated in the research feel this issue has to be addressed for them to use their full potential and contribute to society and settle well in the UK. One woman said, “I was told that they did not recognise the Masters here. I also have lots of diplomas; they didn’t consider any of my qualifications. The government needs to work on ways to improve our degrees”.

Figure 10: Ability to use qualification



The vast majority of the migrant women participating in this research were not able to get formal information or advice about their qualification and how to use it or convert it in the UK.

Only 19.44 percent of the women said they received some kind of advice as to how to use or convert their qualification. The overwhelming majority, 80.56 percent did not obtain any support to convert qualifications. One woman said, “I don’t have any help I feel stuck”. Of those who said that they had had information and advice the majority received that advice from their partner or spouse, friends, family members and the language course providers. Very few (9 percent) accessed the information from the official source, which is UK NARIC.

“I did not know what to do with my qualifications. Everybody was telling me education is expensive and beyond my reach and I need to forget about it. When I came to this language school they told me that my Masters is considered as a first degree level here. That was great for me because I thought I was going to start from zero”.

Not all the women who know about UK NARIC were able to use the service as it requires payment. One woman said she knows she needs to go through the process but “haven’t done that yet because of financial pressure”. Besides, they also stated the problems around how the system is set up. The lack of clarity or guidelines on how they would rule on cases and the lack of a personal contact is a big worry for many of the migrant women who consider using the UK NARIC system. One woman who is waiting on the decision of her application said, “There are no clear rules or guidelines how they are going to rule your case so it might be very well depend on the person working on your case. You send it through the post; you never get to see anyone. Most places you don’t even have a telephone number. It would be easier to have somewhere you could actually go to”.

Another woman mentioned her experience and how she was unprofessionally treated by the service provider.

The migrant women who participated in the research strongly believe that there should be a system where migrant women could be supported in using their qualifications or converting it. “It’s definitely necessary to have a programme or sort of scheme or something that can help people like us, qualified people, because we’re not just here without education. We are qualified and we just want to work as any other person”.

Some women are looking into changing their qualifications and going into a different field of work or as they put it “starting from scratch” as their qualifications have not been properly recognised in the UK. One woman who did a Masters in one of the top ranking universities in US said, “[Name of University] appreciated my degree but no one else seems to understand it. I went to a prestigious university in the US and no one here knows it. I tried to find a job but found it really hard. I am trying to change to teaching”.

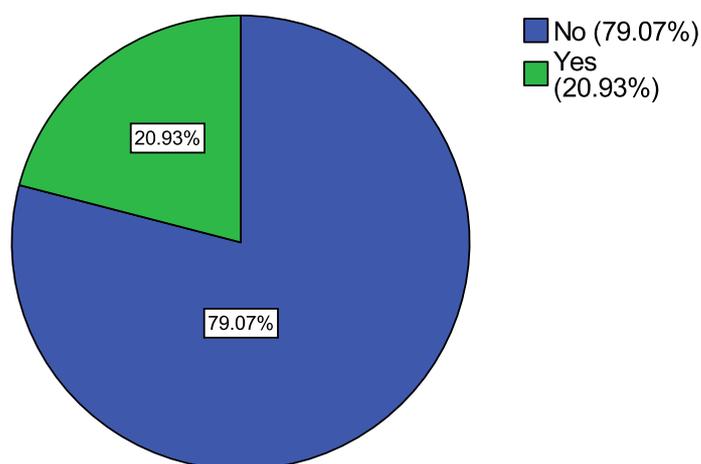
“I spent £120 assessing my qualifications, but on the day the lady from NARIC told me that this qualification is equal to the qualification of this country. But she said, ‘why do you want this qualification why do you want the paper really?’ And I said, ‘this is a qualification, I read for this qualification for two years’. And she said, ‘okay I will print it for you, you have to pay by phone, but what you can do with this is just hang on the wall.’”

However, changing one’s career or profession is not an option available for many migrant women as it incurs additional cost. Many are not able to pay for additional courses or qualifications because they are not earning enough or are not earning at all. One woman who wants to do a qualification in teaching said, “I like to do the course but it’s quite expensive, I mean my husband works but it’s only my husband who works. It’s hard for me to manage because if you want to complete the course its £2500”.

3.2.1 Enrolment in formal education or training after coming to the UK

Given all of the foregoing, (caring responsibilities, lack of respect for qualifications, costs etc.) it is no surprise that many women are not able to enrol for further education or training after coming to the UK. Only 20.93 percent of the focus group participants said they had been enrolled in some form of education or training in the UK. Most of those who are enrolled in training or education are doing mainly computer courses, some maths courses and a few of them are training in childcare.

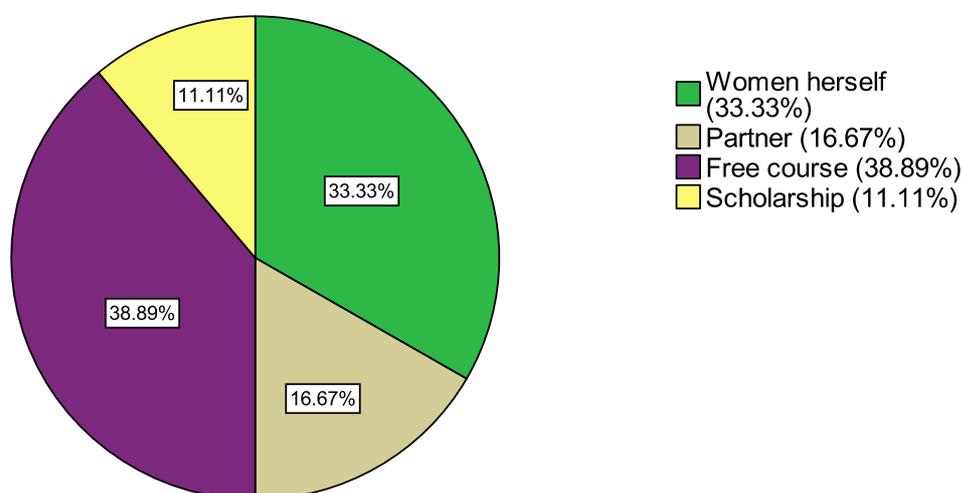
Figure 11: Enrolment in education or training in the UK



3.2.2 Payment for education

This research found that for the most part migrant women attend courses if they are provided for free. In a few other cases, they also enrol in courses if their partner is willing to pay or if the woman herself can afford to pay for it. Some women actually said they can never afford to go to college and university and cannot expect their partners to pay for them on top of all the other expenses they have to pay. One woman said, “Education is very expensive here. We won’t be able to afford expenses of education. I’m very interested to get a degree here, but it’s beyond my reach honestly. Because of that I just need to start a job. Our husbands are obviously paying a lot; they have to pay council taxes, they have to pay rent, they have to pay all the things we can’t stay on their heads, we can’t, they can’t manage our educational expenses”.

Figure 12: Payment for study or training

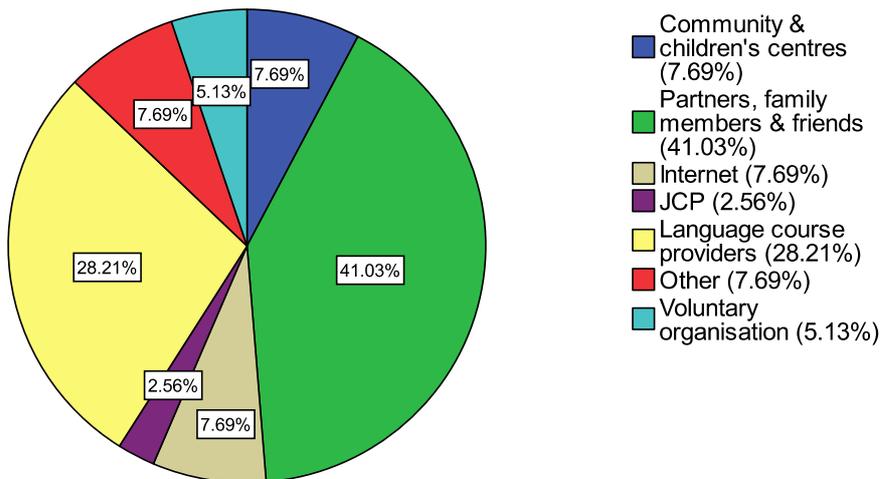


3.2.3 Lack of information

As it was the case under employment, one of the biggest barriers for migrant women in accessing education and training is the lack of formal and appropriate information.

Again, the main sources of information are family members and partners as well as language course providers. Due to lack of information women feel that they are wasting their precious time. One woman said, “There should be posters and brochures everywhere telling migrants where to go. I wasted one year before I got the course. It was so boring; I went to the library and checked information but all the costs of classes were really expensive, I didn’t know about the free courses”.

Figure 13: Education and training information provider



“Sometimes I get really confused, even if I want to apply for university; I don’t know how to apply. I know how to apply but they ask bring a GCSE, I have a bachelor degree and I have passed mathematics, history, English, etc..... You know at the moment I’m like really a ghost I don’t know what to do.”

Since most of the information migrant women access around education and training comes from informal sources, in many cases they report it to be unhelpful, irrelevant or actually a misinformation. One woman said, “Some of my friends have tried to give me advice and pointers but not been very helpful and not sure if the information is correct”. Another said, “A friend gave her a little bit of advice based on her own

experience but it wasn’t really relevant”. Other women described their lack of awareness of specific educational terms in the UK and how the husband or partner may also not be aware in some cases. “I struggled to understand what an A-Level is; what A-Level means because I had never heard of such a term...My husband wasn’t that helpful because he has been away from the UK for a long time himself”.

3.3 English language

Language was reported as one of the main barriers to integration for many of the migrant women in this research. This is both in terms of the challenge it poses around communication and also as a barrier into getting into employment, education and creating a social life in the UK. All the women who participated in this research agree that language is fundamental in the integration process for migrant women who come to the UK. One woman said, “Language is very important, it is essential, most important thing, I can’t emphasise enough”. Another said, “It is the key to open that door into society, language is a way of expressing your personality and managing relationships”.

They recognise that without proficiency in the English language, life will be difficult if not impossible for migrant women in the UK. One woman said, “Language is the very first important thing, without it you are lost, isolated and in a bubble”. Another woman said, “It’s the national language, everywhere you go you need to speak English. Life gets better if you learn the language. If you need to travel, for education, if you want a degree, you need language”. Another said, “You need to speak English; it’s very hard to get by without being able to speak the language of the country you live in”.

“I am really dependent, you know, if I know the language, probably I would know much more, how I can contribute and belong and get all the information I need. At the moment I am paralysed.”

Migrant women also stress the importance of proficiency in the English language as it is the key to leading an independent life. One woman said, “It will help them settle, not only that but to be part of society here. It builds their confidence; to be able to speak, go out and communicate. That makes them independent so they won’t be dependent on friends and family.” Another said, “I like to be independent but because of communication all the time I rely on others and need to ask somebody like my husband or family, ‘can you do this for me?’ you know. My confidence went low”. One migrant woman who went through an abusive relationship and struggled even to explain the abuse to the police was describing how essential it is to speak English. She said, “Without language you can’t do anything in this country, not really. I mean, even when you have an incident with the police, they don’t come with an interpreter, so it’s that basic.”

In addition to being able to use English for communication some of the women who have children emphasised the need to be proficient in the language so that they could assist their children with school and to achieve in life. One woman said, “The classes will help you to help your children with their homework and not feel silly if children ask for help and can’t read what it says”. Another talked about the gap that could be created between mothers and children in the future, if they do not have the support around language when they arrive.

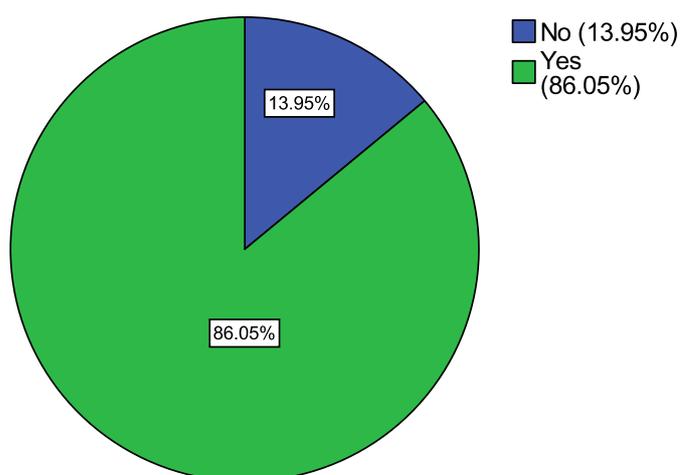
3.3.1 English language proficiency

Participants in the research have varying levels of proficiency in English speaking, reading and writing. Many women stated that although they have good proficiency in reading and writing they often struggle with speaking due to lack of confidence or lack of practice. One woman said, “I was quite good in reading and writing but had to work to gain confidence to speak and still find this most difficult but most rewarding and important”.

3.3.2 English language course

Many of the research participants are, or have been, taking English language courses. The majority of these courses were free and in about 39.19 percent of the cases the woman or her partner paid for the language courses. The payment ranged from a couple of hundreds to thousands of pounds. Many of the migrant women said they would not have been able to attend the courses had they not been free. However, women experienced a range of problems in accessing language courses whether free or not.

Figure 14: English language course in the UK



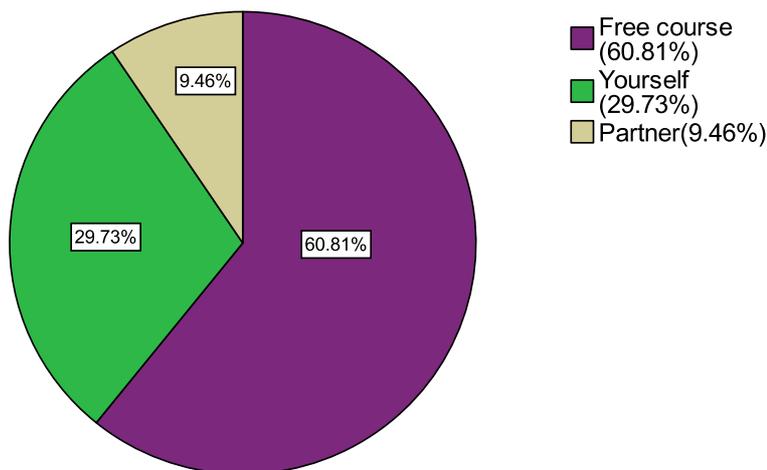
3.3.3 Payment for English language course

“I went to this big college for short courses...My English is okay but I wanted to improve my English. She told me, ‘no you can’t and I said ‘why?’ She said you have to live at least one year in the country, and then you can start. So it was shocking for me”

Women who cannot access free courses really struggle since in most cases they cannot afford to pay for the classes. The vast majority (60.81 percent) of those who participated in the research were enrolled in free language courses. One woman, who could not find work, is taking some informal free classes (pays £20 a year for membership) at an organisation and she

said, “I tried colleges in [Name of area] and they said I had to pay £350 for six sessions for an hour and half class. I can’t ask my husband to pay for all that.” Another said, “It has been expensive to pay the fee as it’s only my partner who is working and earning. I can’t work because of the language issue. English is very important; it’s the first thing you need to work on if you want to change your life. Some women in my class have been in the UK for ten years or more they still don’t speak English, it is very hard”.

Figure 15: Payment for English language course



Most migrant women who come on spousal or partner visas do not have recourse to public funds and therefore are not eligible for many free courses. In certain other cases different funders, especially funders like the Government's Skills Agency Funding, have residency requirements which mean that women on such visas struggle to be eligible. Many of the participants criticised the residency requirement to be eligible for free or even affordable language courses. Migrant women feel it is counter-productive and unnecessary to create such restrictions. They feel that they are left stuck for three years without any support to improve their English, which also could mean that they will not be able to work, progress in life and integrate into society.

Another woman complained of the inflexibility of timetables for courses, "You can't find alternative places. As soon as I arrived here in February I went to register, they said, I could not start until September".

Even when woman are paying to attend language courses, there have been cases where they were not provided with the right information and were placed in inappropriate courses. In one particular case, the woman was not even allowed to have a refund of the money she paid for the course when she pointed out that it was inappropriate.

"In total, I paid minimum of £2000 so far for English course. I asked for advice but they didn't tell me anything, I paid £600 for the first term and when I realised the course is not appropriate for me I tried to change the course...I was told that I need to quit that and wait for two years before I am eligible for an affordable ESOL course."

3.3.4 Women with caring responsibilities

Women with caring responsibilities find it hard to take up courses. This is particularly the case for women with children who also need access to a crèche or other assistance with childcare. One woman said, "If it wasn't free and they didn't provide crèche as well it would

have been impossible for me to study.” Similarly, a woman who was told to pay £800 said, “At first they told me there is free crèche and then they said you have to pay, £800 per month. I stopped it. I can’t afford it”.

3.3.5 Different levels of language assistance

Even migrant women who came from Anglophone countries say that there is a need to assist them in identifying accents and dialects in the UK. One such woman said, “For English speakers a class on idioms and culture, such as tone and sarcasm could be helpful. British people have funny sense of humour which can sometimes be confusing and I don’t always understand it”. Another said, “Taking an English language course is very important for a woman to settle here because it is hard to understand how people speak here. The way people speak English is very different from the way people speak English in India”. Another English speaking woman said, “Everything here is different; the accent, the slang it’s very difficult. I can speak English but my English is very different. I find it hard to hear what people are saying. I think language is the most important thing, it will be difficult to survive without English”.

Other migrant women, who perhaps are not native English language speakers but do have a certain proficiency in English language, need to have advanced level courses or possibly spaces that provide opportunities for practice and conversation. Some women discussed the lack of tailored courses that meet the needs of those with different levels of proficiency and the rigidity of the language levels and courses available. One woman said, “ESOL is good, but some of us, we need more, another level, more advanced courses. We already are professionals; we need advice or courses that help with that”.

3.3.6 Older women

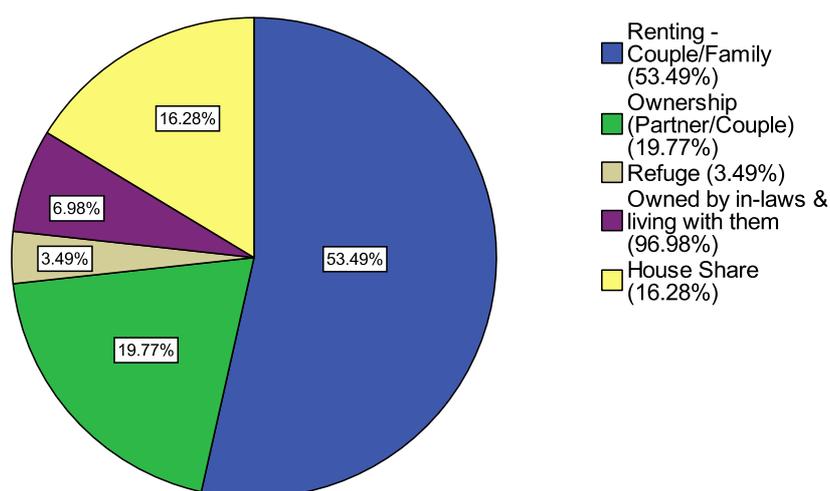
The above point was also reiterated by the older women who participated in this research. There were 12 older migrant women (50 – 67 years old) who participated in the research who recently arrived to join their spouses. One of the issues which all but one of these participants raised was that there are no tailored courses for them which take into consideration their actual needs. This group of women need more conversational courses where they can improve communication skills, get by and understand what is being said by service providers like the GP. They feel their English language courses have not been meaningful for them. Another issue raised by this group was that the tutors do not speak their language so it is particularly hard to comprehend, as there is no chance of a translation when they are struggling. One of the women said, and they all agreed, “Without an interpreter, no matter how good English tutor is, he’s going to come and teach us, we will not know what he is trying to say to us and we get frustrated because we don’t understand what he’s trying to say to us. So knowing both the languages is important when teaching English”.

These older women also feel that their reason behind learning English is also different to that of younger migrant women who have come to the UK to start a life, work and build a career. The older women feel that what they actually need is conversational courses. One of them said, “We don’t want to go to the university, we don’t want the grammar, they teach us vast kind of thing which we don’t understand. We want more conversation rather than writing, grammar, spellings; we need more conversation. Because they keep making us write, we don’t know what we are writing, my mind will go off after awhile”.

3.4 Housing

The majority of the migrant women (53.49 percent) who participated in the focus groups live in rented accommodation. Around 19 percent live in a property they own and around 16 percent live in shared accommodation. In some cases it was noticed that even if the partner or the couple own the house they also share it with family members and in-laws. In others cases (6.98 percent), couples also live in a property owned by their in-laws.

Figure 16: Housing



The vast majority (89.53 percent) of the migrant women who participated in the research expressed themselves as “satisfied” with the neighbourhood they live in. Some like their neighbourhood because they have friendly neighbours and others appreciate the convenience of their location for local amenities and services. Some migrant women, particularly those in London, said that they like the multi-cultural nature of their neighbourhood and that they could learn about and from different cultures.

About 10 percent of the research participants however, did not like the neighbourhood they live in. Some of the main reasons mentioned were unfriendly and racist neighbours, lack of public transport and inaccessibility of amenities and an unsafe living environment. One woman who lives in a refuge and would like to change the area she lives in if she can said, “Some of the people you see in the area are very racist. I make sure not to go home late, if it’s late in the evening, I take a taxi. Something might happen to me. I am always careful not

to go around the youth in the area. One woman who came to the refuge left because she couldn't take the racism in the area".

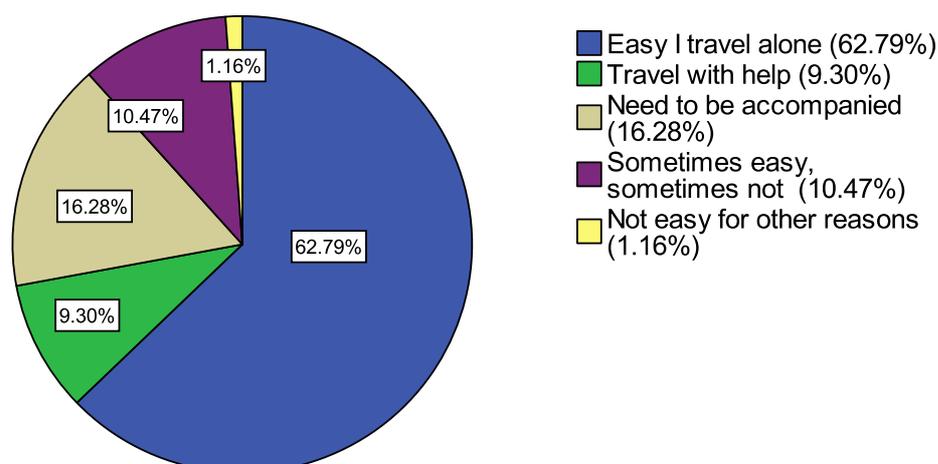
Many of the women described the demographics of their neighbourhoods to be very mixed with different cultures and nationalities. The majority, i.e. 75 percent have British neighbours and some 66 percent described their neighbours as mixed nationalities. Only 30.95 percent said that they do have neighbours from their country of origin.

Migrant women also discussed the challenges they face around affordability of housing and in some cases the size and quality of housing. For some women, they were shocked at how small, damp and run-down the housing stock is in the UK and had far higher expectations. Many women felt that the quality of housing they had in their home countries was significantly superior to that which they have here in the UK and yet they pay significantly more for it. Inevitably with a large proportion of the participants being from London, this may reflect the wider housing issues common to the general population. Many spoke of the struggle they face daily to pay for their accommodation and related expenses. This was particularly a worry and a challenge for those women who are not working. One woman who is trying to find employment and is renting a small flat said, "I need to pay £900 for rent, and £100 council tax with bill, and we don't have any money enough to buy clothes for my husband or for my son. It's difficult and I can't save one pence, and always we spend money overdue from bank and the bank will charge for that as well." Another said, "The rent that we're paying, it does affect our life, because, yeah, obviously if you pay more than half of your money to rent, you can't actually enjoy your life, can you?"

3.5 Travel

In terms of travel, there was a divide amongst participants living in cities where there are good transport links and others who live in areas where there are not. Although the majority (62.79 percent) of the research participants said that they do travel on their own without needing help, the means of travel was also different. Women who live in areas where there is a good public transport system say it is easier to travel around. However, in areas where there are not good transport links, women struggle to get around and say having a driving licence is crucial if they are going to travel and get by easily. One woman who lives in a small town says, "The transport link is not good and I need to apply for UK driving licence."

Figure 17: Travel



However, for many women attaining their driving licence was not straightforward as they were required to have residence in the UK for at least six months. One woman who is struggling with that said, “Being a migrant woman, when I wanted to do my driving, I had to wait nearly six months to apply for my licence. I can’t really wait, because if I want to start my work, or I want to travel, take my car and drive, but I can’t really do it, I have to be dependable now. I’m really dependable on either my mother-in-law or my husband. Someone has to take me out, unless I’m walking, it’s a big problem. Six months is such a long time.”

Other women, who use public transport, say that it is very expensive for them to get around as so many are not earning. For instance, one of the major challenges raised by the older women that participated in the research was the cost of public transport. They stress that they have very low income levels. Most of them rely on their partners’ pension payments and there is no support to access affordable or free transport tickets. Almost all the women in that group said they have a problem with the cost of public transport.

“Now I am 60 years old, but no one gives me the information of what age I should be to apply for the free bus pass, what are the facilities regarding the bus pass, what are the criteria where I can meet them and apply. I was told to come back when I am 64 years old. My husband is over 65 and has a free bus pass. He can go wherever he likes, but I can’t go anywhere.”

It was not just the older women who described the expense of public transport as a challenge for them to get around and integrate into life in the UK. Other migrant women also stated that public transport is too expensive for them. One migrant woman, who lives in London, said; “The Underground and buses are too expensive”. Others described that they are not considered eligible for student discount even if they are English language students and yet that discount would greatly help them. “At the moment I am a student of [Name of college], if

we can use our student card for travelling it could be useful. We are real students but they are not giving us any concession or anything.”

3.6 Accessing Services

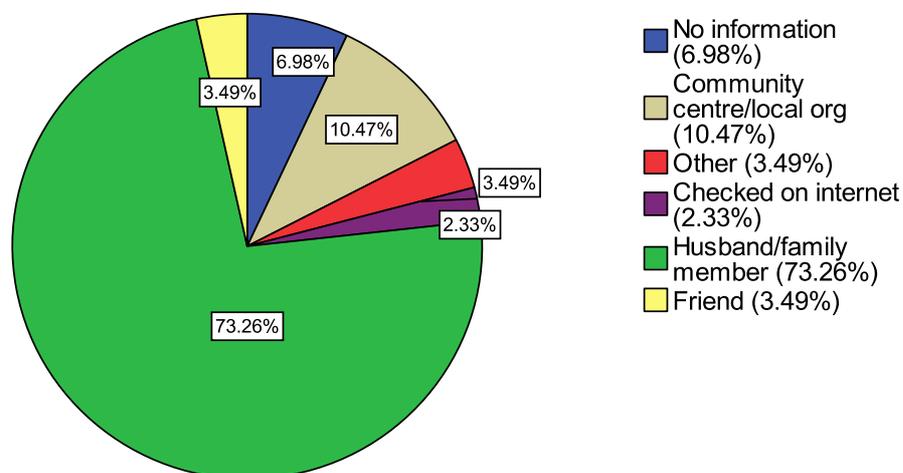
3.6.1 Health

All the migrant women who participated in this research said they have registered with a GP, but not all of them were allowed to do so at the time of arrival. Some of the women said that they had been told they would have to pay to use the GP service until they had been resident in the UK for six months. One woman said, “Because I am not an EU citizen I was allowed to register at the GP after six months. When I tried to register they asked for money before the six months, so I had to wait for six month before I could access the service.”

3.6.1. (a) Lack of information

The main problem, however, which was repeatedly mentioned, was the lack of information around registering and accessing health services. The vast majority of the women obtained information about accessing medical services from their partners, family or friends and there was no independent source of information that was provided.

Figure 18: Information on how and where to access medical services in the UK



One migrant woman observed that the this lack of information might be deliberate to deter migrants from accessing health services but that if so, this was a short-sighted approach which could backfire. “Making it increasingly hard for people to actually access different services, like getting a GP, I mean, I think that backfires a lot, because basically you make things so much harder that you create problems where there should not be. It took me four years to register with a GP, and I did it because I came to [Name of organisation] and they said, ‘You really need to do it’. In Mexico I was not registered with a GP, I had my family doctor, but it was different. And I was lucky because I never got sick, but if I had, since I’m not registered to a GP, I don’t know where to go, am I going to wait until it’s an A&E situation.”

“I mean on a practical level, just providing information... like; health is done by NHS and you need to register with a GP ...I asked [Name of husband] to ask one of his colleagues, ...they recommended a GP near us. But I still had no idea that it was free, so I waited until I thought things were bad enough that it was worth paying for. Then I went, and at that time I also didn’t know that I had access to health care as a resident and I didn’t need to prove my immigration status which of course they made me prove. Initially the GP didn’t even want to let me register, and then they finally did.”

Besides, not all migrant women coming to the UK on spousal/partner visas have partners who know about the health system in the country. Some women come with, or to join, a European partner and others come with, or to join, a partner who is a work permit holder. One woman who came to the UK with her husband who is from the European Union stated how she struggled to access information on how to access health services.

3.6.1. (b) Access to interpretation

Having been registered with a GP, some women struggle with language when they attend GP or hospital appointments. Very few of the women who participated in the research said they had been offered interpreters.

“In the hospital they used Google translate...They asked for someone who might be able to interpret amongst staff and when they couldn’t see anyone, they just used Google translate...”

Women had been told to find and pay for an interpreter themselves or the majority had to have their own family members to interpret. In some cases they were simply unable to understand anything that was said at their appointment. As one woman described, “When I first went to register at the GP near my house, I couldn’t speak, English and they couldn’t understand me. They told me ‘go home to find a person who can speak English and translate’. Well I go home and my husband’s friend

told us about another GP, a little far away from my home, who can speak our language and we went to register there”.

For many migrant women being told to bring their own interpreter poses certain problems; they might not have family members that could help or most importantly they might not be comfortable, indeed it may not be safe, to discuss personal health matters in front of their partner or a family member. As one woman said, “The difficulty is that because personal problems sometimes I don’t want to discuss with husband or with the kids”.

In one research locality, there is a group of 12 Nepalese women who came to the UK at a later stage in life. As older women they inevitably face a raft of health problems and in particular diabetes and high blood pressure. This group of women is particularly disadvantaged by language issues and again are reluctant to discuss health matters in front of family.

These women describe how GP surgeries call them sometimes to give them an update on their tests or for follow-ups. With very little or no level of proficiency in English, many of the women cannot understand a single word in that conversation.

Despite the fact that there is a known, high concentration of an older Nepalese population in this locality, GPs had not made provision for interpretation for what was inevitably going to be a population that required it.

“So even the doctors, when I first came to the GP office, it was such a shock because the GP was still looking on the computer screen typing things when I entered he didn’t even look at me, he just said “how can I help?” While he was still looking at the monitor and I was entering with my boy and saying Hello! It was completely impersonal and very rude. He was functional but he could be a machine doing the same job there was no human interaction.”

Participants expressed broader views about UK health care generally. Some women felt that the UK approach to health care was very cavalier,

Other women felt that they needed a more holistic approach to health and this was important to them. They feel that GPs deal with only one symptom at a time in a short time frame rather than addressing the overall health and well-being and often provide little actual help. One woman said, “So the first challenge is seeing a doctor because what I find out here is that if you

don’t have any serious problems the doctor doesn’t really do anything for you”.

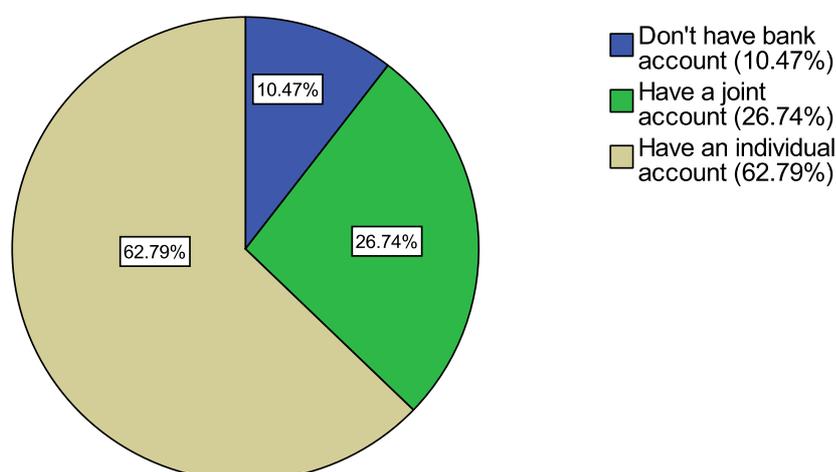
Many women were hugely grateful for the NHS as a free service but they were also aware that the health service was under severe strain and they felt that increasingly NHS may no longer be able to provide the best response to more complex health issues.

Women had mixed reactions concerning their ability to access culturally and religiously appropriate services. Many said that they were really happy that there was “respect for their religious belief and that they can ask for a female doctor if they wish”, while others said that they were not offered a female doctor (and did not know they could request this) and that they were not able to access the service because of that. Guidance to medical practitioners (Citizens Advice, 2015) makes clear that it could be a breach of equality obligations to fail to provide either appropriate interpreters or a female doctor.

3.6.2 Banking

Only 10.47 percent of the migrant women who participated in the focus groups did not have bank accounts. The majority of the women actually have individual accounts and some have a joint account with their partners.

Figure 19: Bank account



However, in many cases women reported that it was not easy to open either a joint or an individual account. Some of the women did not have information on the different documentation, such as, proof of address that was required to open a bank account. Even after having that information, it was not easy to have utility bills and other documents to show their residency when they have only moved to the UK recently. One woman said, “It was hard to open the account because they want your name added to the utility bill and it was hard to get a bill in my name.” Another woman who had tried to open an account with no success, said, “I tried when I came to have a bank account but it was very complicated and I was asked to provide proof of address, which I didn’t have at the time. So I don’t have an account yet”.

This creates a problem for women generally because this is another thing that makes them dependent and reliant on others. One woman said that it makes her feel really worried when she is out and about as she feels that in the case of an emergency she can not even access a cash point to draw some money. Other women who are going into employment find it very

difficult as they are mostly asked to give their bank account details for payment. Some women said they were left with no other option but to open a joint account with their partners as that is the only way the bank will allow them to have an account. Not all women are comfortable with such an arrangement, however, as they feel it compromises their financial independence. One woman said, "It's my money and I am not happy that my husband can access it." Another said, "I didn't want that [Joint account], I wanted to feel independent and I wanted the money to go into my account."

In cases where there is abuse and violence in a relationship the issues involved in having a bank account or a joint account become particularly problematic. One woman said that her husband did not want to include her name on the household bills and she could not open an account because of that. Another woman whose relationship had broken down due to domestic violence and who had a joint account said that it was hard for her to resolve the issues arising about her account.

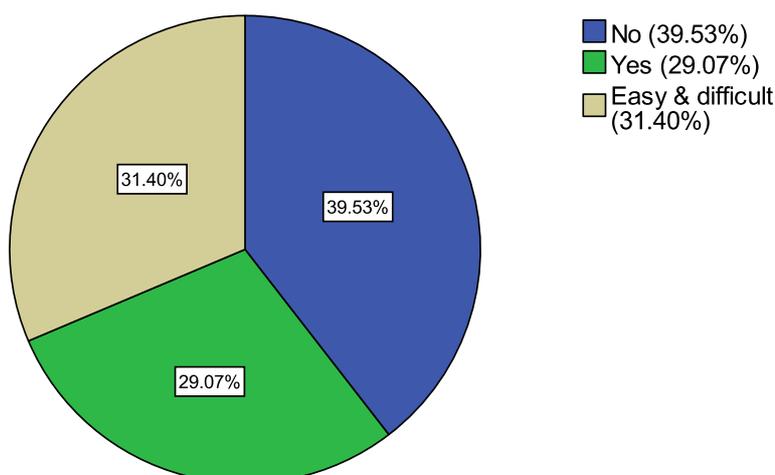
3.7 Social life

Being able to create a social life and have friends in the UK was identified as one of the most important components of settling in or integration for migrant women in the UK. Having a social support system either through friends or family members was said to be crucial. Women use social support systems as a source of information; to know what life is like in the UK, to know where to access services, to find help around child care and much more. It is also an essential way of making women feel welcomed and happy with their life in the UK, as many suffer from complete isolation and loneliness. Indeed a significant body of research has demonstrated repeatedly that the relational model is key to women's well-being, self-esteem and mental health (Covington in Straussner and Brown 2002, Miller 1976). As one woman said,

"If you don't have family support you really really, in urgency, you need to have friends, to get support. Sometimes even your body can feel isolation, it's not easy, it's not easy to be an immigrant, I would say, in the first four years or five years."

Many of the migrant women who participated in the research came to the UK looking forward to meeting new people, making friends and socialising with British people. However, most of them were taken aback by the very reserved life style in the UK, some describing it as 'closed door' way of life. Only 29.07 percent of the women who participated in the focus groups said that it was easy for them to make friends in the UK. This was echoed across migrant women coming from different cultures and geographical locations around the world. It was not particular to any women coming from certain areas of the globe; the experience was similar to those coming from English speaking or non-English speaking countries, from North or South America, Asia, Africa or East Europe. The experience was also very similar whether the woman was married to British national, EU national or work permit holder.

Figure 20: Easy to make friends in the UK



One of the research participants from East Europe, discussing why she had found it hard to make friends said, “When you aren’t young and not from a country it’s hard. When you study you meet people and work colleagues, if not it would be difficult. You will be lonely if you haven’t done anything like that. One woman from Asia said that although people are generally ‘friendly and polite, it is hard to make a close or special friend. “Back in my country, even when we use the bus or train, when you sit down next to people you just chat. But in here nobody is going to chat with you, everybody use their own phone or busy on something. If you try, some will say, ‘yes or no’ that’s it. It’s probably the cultural difference.” This emphasis on cultural difference is significant and the connection between culture and language shows up in the quote below. This perhaps reflects why even fluent English speakers value English classes that can pick up on social cues and interaction.

“Understanding someone’s behaviour, not what they’re saying, but how they’re acting and the social cues are different, and that makes it very hard. Sometimes, the British are so polite that, you don’t know if they’re telling you what they’re thinking. Sometimes I wonder, do you need to go? You don’t need to go?, I think you’re fidgeting but you are telling me, ‘No, no it’s fine, it’s fine’. I can’t really understand.”

3.7.1 Language

In addition to the cultural differences the reserved nature of the British and what is perceived by the women in this project to be a general British indifference to socialising with migrants, there are also other challenges that make it hard for women to create the social life and friendship they desperately need to settle and integrate in the UK. One such challenge is the barrier associated with language. Some of the migrant women said that they find it hard to communicate with British people because of the limited language proficiency they have. One

woman who is now attending language courses said, “I don’t feel confident speaking English with strangers as I don’t always understand them and people are not always patient.”

“There’s been times that I was afraid to speak; I don’t know what respond I was gonna get, they got this distance where they don’t wanna know you. They could empathise, put themselves into our shoes.”

The gap in communication due to limited language proficiency for some women makes them feel that people have mistaken impressions of them. They think that people may assume they are quiet and shy while they are actually outgoing and very sociable. People may blame them for not making an effort to socialise while the problem they have is the

language and they would love to socialise and make friends. Migrant women actually feel that they have lost their personality. One woman said, “When I just arrived here of course I knew how to speak English but I hadn’t been before in an English-speaking country. I wasn’t the person I usually was in my country, with this language. The thing is people have a different idea about you, ‘that girl doesn’t say anything’, or ‘doesn’t want to just make friends’ – it’s a bit like rude, or whatever.”

3.7.2 Lack of opportunities

Others mention the fact that there are very few opportunities, if any, to meet people outside their immediate family or even just their partner. They say that if they are not taking courses or working, it is difficult to find people to talk to and socialise with. One woman said that she “mostly lives as a housewife so it is hard to make friends”. Another said, “It’s hard to meet English people if you not working or don’t join a club, that is where you can meet people. The first three months in the UK was very hard, I didn’t leave the house much and found it quite lonely as my husband works a lot.”

3.7.3 Dependency

Some migrant women feel that the lack of a social life created independently from others makes them rely heavily on their partner and some family members (if any) for social support. Some feel this is not healthy and could actually create an unnecessary pressure and burden on the relationship. Several women emphasised that the onus was on them to step out of their comfort zone and reach out. One woman said, “Don’t rely on your husband 100%; it’s going to put lots of pressure on your husband or your wife”. Another said it would be hard for her as an independent woman to have to rely on her partner for settling in the UK including creating a social life. She said, “I couldn’t live like that. I can’t live in somebody else’s pocket to begin with, let alone where I’m reliant on them to do my communicating and get me friends, I can’t.”

A few of the migrant women who participated in the research, try and maintain the social life and contacts they had in their country of origin but do not find it easy. Some try and visit their country of origin as often as possible and others try and maintain contacts with friends and family members over the phone, through emails and Skype. Not all have the opportunity to do so, however. One woman who lives in the Americas said, “I couldn’t go back to my country for another year and a half, because I have to fly 16 hours and it is so expensive, it’s like £600, £800”.

“Don’t try to be, or make like sort of comfort zone, fake comfort zone at home with your husband at all, it was what I did in the first months and it was really bad because it created pressure on my husband. But also it was fear you know, so instead of feeling like an alien or outsider, push yourself. The word ‘no’ is not permitted.”

Another woman described how on first arrival she felt very lonely and isolated, especially as her husband works full-time, so she started phoning home, “All the time I tried to call back home and then cry and then...most of the time, my husband said, I spend more money because of the phone.” Another said, “I want to talk to my best friend, but there is a seven hours difference, so I can only do it at certain times of day, if it goes beyond those hours it’s too late for me.”

However, migrant women do realise that although they try and maintain a long distance social life it is not as sustainable and also is not very helpful with integrating in to life in the UK.

3.7.4 Prejudice

“When I had a baby I went to parent’s classes...so I started to introduce myself and said, ‘sorry my English is not good, I can’t express myself nicely’. But I made my best effort and two British women, they were laughing, ‘ha ha ha’ and they were making me really nervous. They said to me, ‘this is not English class; there are lot of colleges’. ‘Oh my God!’ The worst thing is the teacher who came in didn’t stop them. I told to them, ‘what can you speak, do you speak just English? I speak French, Spanish, Arabic and tell me, what is your level on education, do you have?’ ...We hope they respect our feelings, you know, even if they find us not very good in English, we are not stupid of course... I have stopped looking for British friends because I am scared to have the same character.”

For some however, the issue is more sinister, some migrant women said that they have actually faced prejudice, hostility and quite an unfriendly environment when they try and meet new people, socialise and ultimately make friends. There were two women in particular who had had very bad experiences where they were belittled and made fun of which made them feel unwelcome and shaken by the experience. One woman said, “I don’t feel British people like to know others or to mix. I feel there is a large culture gap, not sure how to get over it.” Another said that she finds it difficult to make friends because some people don’t like immigrants’. Another woman who experienced prejudice even from her partners’ friends said, “Some British people, I’m talking about my husband’s circle of friends, who are between 25 to 35 years old more or less, so young people, who haven’t been abroad, they are really closed and they have lots of prejudices. I had to face some of the prejudices.”

3.7.5 Misunderstandings

Some women feel that one of the barriers to creating a social life and making friends in the UK is also down to misunderstandings that are created because of cultural differences or not understanding certain idioms and sayings. One woman who has been actively trying to make friends in her town and engaging in different community events said, “For someone like me who have only been here four years or less I think its very difficult, because I had lots of situations when I would say something that I think is appropriate but they don’t for example, or it’s the other way around and that causes lots of misunderstanding and confusion.” Another woman said that those misunderstandings have made her quite conscious of what she is saying and more reserved as she does not want to offend people unintentionally. She said, “In terms of language and friends I am more conscious. I am being more aware of how I communicate and who I communicate with and am a little bit reserved than I used to be. But at the same time, I don’t want this to define me, because I still want to go with who I am, as myself, that is all you have at the end.”

3.7.6 Easy to make friends

For a few women however, the process of making friends and socialising has been easier. Around 29 percent of the women who participated in the research said that they found it relatively easy to make friends in the UK. The reasons for that vary from woman to woman. Some women attribute it to the fact that they are sociable by nature and they find it easy to make friends. Others say that they have extended family members who help them with their social life and for some it is previous acquaintances and friends that they had either through school or work if they have previously lived or stayed in the UK. Others have found friends from their country of origin who have migrated to the UK or other migrant women from different countries.

There were no particular trends noticed around language proficiency, duration of stay in the UK or country of origin that were linked to those who said it was easy for them to make friends in the UK. They came from different parts of the world, had a very mixed level of English language proficiency and have been in the UK for various periods of time, some of them months and others some years.

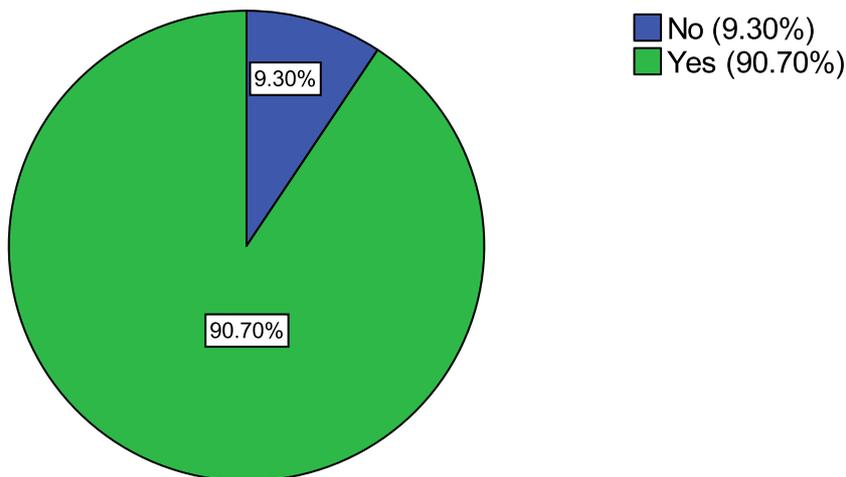
One woman who had lived in the UK as a student before migrating on a spousal visa and who had made friends in that time said, "It was easy for me because I had friends and I can speak the language. My friends helped me a lot but I don't know if it's easy for someone who doesn't have anyone here to help out on everything." Another woman who attributed her social life to her own extrovert character said, "I am a chatterbox, happy to approach people, not a problem. I have friends from all over the world. If you are a good communicator and have skills to make friends it is easy if not it's difficult because life is busy and people don't have time to make friends."

Another migrant woman said that she was lucky that she found people who have interests in common with her. "It's easy if you have common ground. In general I will speak to anyone really so not a problem making friends for me. Most of my friends are British nationals, met them through the pub and working there and some from twitter. If you have common interest like football, it's easier. I have some friends from work, some from the neighbourhood, because I talk to people around most of the time." A woman who has extended family members locally said, "I nicely adopted to everything, it was not that difficult for me, because I have a joint family over here, so I was quite comfortable. If I didn't have their support it would have been difficult because you don't have anybody here to guide, the whole situation would be different."

3.7.7 Making friends

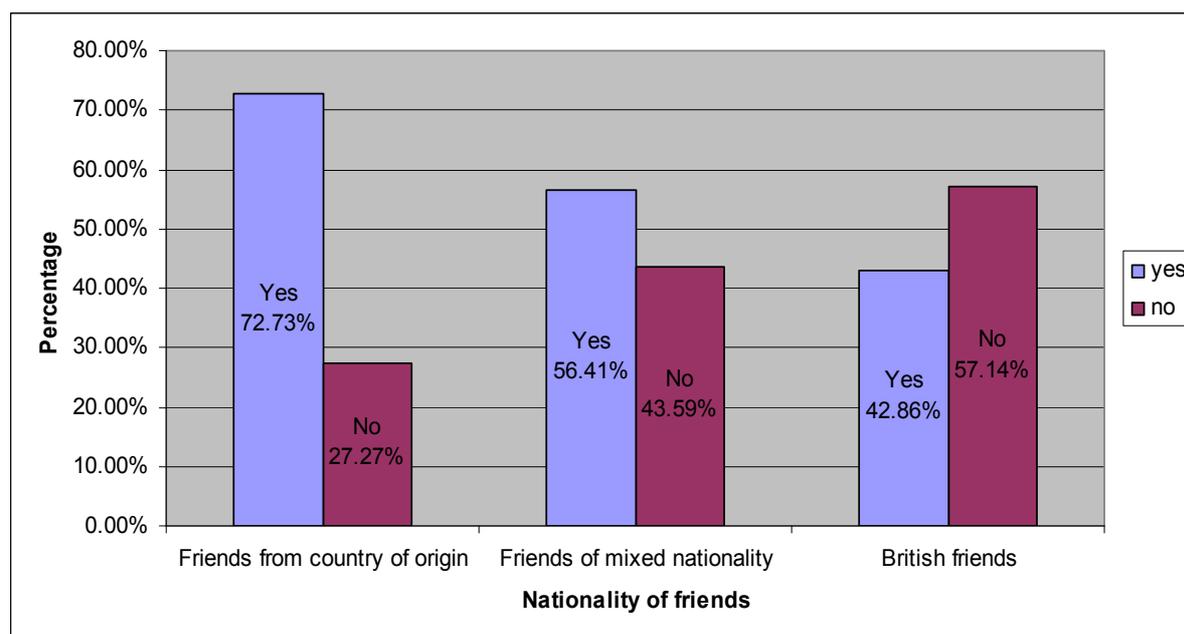
Despite the difficulties many migrant women try and make friends wherever and whenever they can as they believe having a social life and having friends is crucial to their integration process. Over 90% of the women who participated in the focus groups said that they have made friends in the UK.

Figure 21: Friends in the UK



Migrant women make friends in different places and with different people, most participants (nearly 58 percent) made friends in language schools. This can be one of the contributing factors for the high level of friends from country of origin and other nationalities that migrant women participants reported. Of all the women who said they do have friends in the UK, 72.73 percent said their friends are from their country of origin and 56.41 percent said their friends are mixed nationalities but non-British. In addition, as mentioned above the more migrant women feel that they are not able to make British friends, the more they are drawn to those who are originally from their country of origin or other migrant backgrounds.

Figure 22: Nationality of friends



One woman who attends a language course said, “I met my friends mainly from college and community centre and are largely from other migrant communities. It is easy to make friends from other countries through class like ESOL as everyone is in similar situation but harder to make friends with British people who have been here all their life.”

As mentioned above many of the migrant women also feel that it is easier to make friends with other nationalities and people who have migration histories in their family even when there are no language barriers and where there are opportunities to meet British people. One woman said, “Some of them who don’t have any immigration history in their families, are really really closed.” Another said, “There are lots of children from immigrants here, I found those people really friendly and really supportive with my situation.”

Last Tuesday I went to exercise class, there was one Egyptian woman and when she started her turn running, she quickly feel tired and I told her I will run with you ... I gave her hug and she cried, she told me, ‘I’ve been here six years, no body gave me hug like that’. She really made me cry.”

3.7.8 Women with children

Migrant women with children also stated that their children’s schools and events organised there have given them great opportunities to meet other parents and make friends and socialise with others. One woman who attends many such events said, “Thank God I have good friends now, I knew them through my kid’s school and they are very good.” Another woman said she participates in a programme arranged through her son’s school which involves weekly meetings where parents take turns to cook for each other, exchange ideas

and meet other mums. She says it is similar to parenting classes and she really enjoys the sessions and it has created an opportunity to meet people and socialise.

“I went to a class for first moms and there were a lot of English ladies. I just ask them one question, they answer one word, that’s it and I was, ‘oh what can I do?’ I just like to be a friend, just talk and they won’t talk anything with me. I thought I look like a strange person. I don’t understand, maybe they think we cannot speak English at all? Maybe I am look like a monster? I don’t know. They don’t want to open their heart, to talk with us. I don’t understand why? And I went back home and I cried with my husband because I felt bad like, ‘hey, what’s wrong with me?’ We just went to that class to help each other, to share ideas together and we just had a new born baby. Usually you get that advice from your family, but they are not here, and that’s why we came to this class to talk each other, to share ideas. But no one talks with you, just only your tutor.”

Although having children is an opportunity for some to meet other mums and parents, opening doors for socialising, for others it is actually mentioned as a barrier in creating a social life. Some of the women with children, especially those of pre-school age discussed the challenges around going out to meet people and make friends while they are the primary carers of their small children. One woman said, “I cannot go outside because I have two children, I want some help, if I live in my country, many people help me.” Early motherhood is also the time where many of the women greatly need social support from family and friends but could not access any help either because they do not have any family members in the UK and/or they have not been able to create the social life they need in the UK.

3.7.9 Community centres

Women who have organised communities or community centres near by also say that they use them to socialise and find out general information about life in the UK. Around 46 percent of the women who participated in the focus groups said they made friends in the community. A woman who enjoys gardening and is part of her community greenhouse team said, “I am growing vegetables because I have a lot of free time, it creates opportunities to make friends and meet people and practice my English.” One woman who has become a member of an Art House in her area and who has set-up two music bands there says that she likes that people from all sorts of backgrounds come to the Art House and she feels there is a welcoming atmosphere that she does not feel in other areas. “The Art House is very multicultural and they have lots of people from all around the world and they are very open-minded so I felt welcomed there while in other places that are very British I felt misunderstood a lot of the time.

Women who are religious also turn to religious places and events to access that social life they need. One woman who said she found it really hard to make friends and have a social

life in the six years she has lived in the UK said that the only opportunity that she had to make friends was the church and the choir of which she is a member. She said, “Having that kind of social aspect of life is very important in helping you integrate within society.” Another woman who helps her local community centre with Eid and other celebrations, said, “I enjoy these events as they bring the community together; you meet people and learning new things”.

3.7.10 Voluntary sector organisations

Other women say voluntary sector organisations have helped them a great deal in getting information on local activities or organising it themselves. Many women owe their social life to such organisations. One woman said, “Coming to [Name of organisation], finding all these people, this amazing community, changed my life, it really did, in the sense that, I can wake up and say, ‘Oh, I’m going to [Name of organisation] today it’s really exciting. They speak to you, it makes it easy to handle when you have a day where you get another rejection, and you think, I’m never going to make it here, what am I doing here?’”

3.7.11 Older Women

The older migrant women who participated in the research had a particularly difficult experience in creating a social life and finding friends. They had additional, linked barriers such as language and transport. However, they all came to a weekly coffee morning subsidised by the local council and they say that has been a life line for their social life. One of the women said, “Because of coffee mornings I can meet everyone here like a social thing. We can come and enjoy we can have a conversation and know different things around us, otherwise we’d be blinded sitting at home.” Another said, “Had it not been for the coffee morning “we would never have socialised because we don’t have a bus pass and can’t even travel far, the only place we have is the coffee mornings without it we have no social life at all”. Unfortunately, at the time of the interviews, the coffee mornings were at risk of closure due to funding cuts.

When asked what will perhaps help with social life and making friends, some women suggested that having information on local activities in which they can participate could assist them at least to make a start. One woman said, “I have no clue about anything happening in the area or how I could find out. I don’t know how people have fun here.” One woman who had such information from her language college as they provide posters and flyers about local events, such as, live music or cultural festivals and functions said this has

“The only thing that helped, was getting a dog, because people stop to talk to you about how cute your puppy is. But that’s how I met people, it’s not for lack of trying ... I understand now, people for leisure, like to go to the pub, I like going to pub, it’s really nice, but beyond that?”

helped her to make friends and socialising in general. Another said, “When it comes to socialising I would not be opposed to making an effort yourself, but I don’t know where to start. Someone needs to guide you with where to start.”

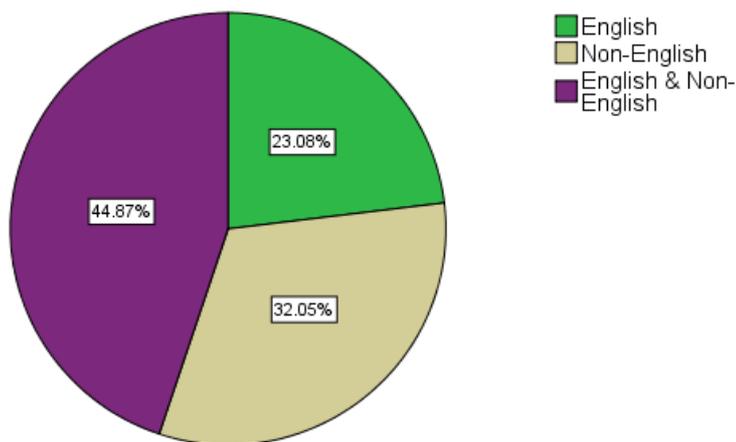
3.7.12 Friends at work

Interestingly, of the migrant women participants who are in employment or are in volunteering roles only 24.14 percent said they were able to make friends at work.

3.7.13 Language spoken with friends

The majority (44.87 percent) of the women who participated in the focus groups speak both English and non-English languages with their friends. This is not surprising given that the majority of the women have friends either from their country of origin or other nationalities. About 32 percent speak non-English languages with their friends and 23 percent use only English for communication with their friends and social groups.

Figure 23: Language spoken with friends



3.8 Media and public rhetoric on migration

Discussions with women sometimes touched on the media and public rhetoric around migration and if that has an impact on their settling in and integration process. Many of those who follow the discussions said that it has a negative effect in their integration process and that they are disappointed with what they hear and the lack of an honest debate and discussion around migration.

“I can turn on the television at any time and watch any news show and go huh, I'm not wanted. But, it offends me even more because people I know will actually say to me, 'well, they don't mean people like you' and I go 'fuck you' because that is exactly the fucking problem is that oh, it's fine 'cause I'm pasty and I get burned in the sun ... mark them out by their skin colour and then with the white ones we'll go, 'oh but not you'. I supposed to be somehow less offended by that? Oh, 'cause you accept me, oh, cheers, thanks, Nah. No, that just says to me that your bigotry is even worse than I thought it was”.

One woman, who feels that the rhetoric around those who are Muslim is very harmful, said; “I am human, if I want to live here, I want to be happy, and you have to respect me as human, British or not, on spousal visa or not. I am not bad, I am not killing you, I am not “Daish” (ISIS) as you say.” Another described her personal experience with a neighbour, she said, “My neighbour told me ‘you came here to take benefits and to make the country Islam’.”

Other women described the racist attacks they have encountered not only themselves but also their children at school. Furthermore, in some cases they felt appropriate action was not taken on the matter and they felt the schools were complicit by being reluctant to act. Some had to change schools for their children. One woman said, “My children had experience this, they told them ‘go back to your country’, ‘why you can't speak English’ and so on. My son, he was only year 5 when he first came to England. One day, I pick him up and arrived at home and I served something to eat and he said, ‘Mummy, I want to go back to Korea I dislike it here’. After that, I changed the school.”

3.9 Immigration system

In addition to those challenges and barriers mentioned above, migrant women in the UK also face barriers to integration which is related to their immigration status. Since 2013, the Government has introduced a two-part requirement for those applying for permanent residence in the UK. Applicants are required to pass the ‘Life in the UK’ test and have a speaking and listening qualification in English at B1 Common European Framework of Reference or higher level (Home Office, 2013). The only exemptions are for children under 18, those aged 65 or older and those who have a physical or mental condition which severely

restricts their ability to learn English and/or communicate and/or take the Life in the UK test (Home Office, 2013).

These strict requirements have made it quite hard for some women to get their permanent residency which means that they have continued to pay a cumbersome amount of money to continue to renew their spousal visas even after living in the UK for many years, technically making them eligible to apply for settlement.

One woman who was going through the preparation process for the Life in the UK test was surprised by the content of the book and what she was expected to memorise and know. She said, "Life in the UK test is very surprising and very, very, very difficult. When I read the book it's totally too much difficult, you know, it's all old history like four hundred years ago" Another said, "It [questions on Life in the UK test] should be more about the way they speak English and live here, not about the past...". Another woman said, "It's very difficult you know for us, we came from other countries, we don't know the history, and it's too difficult. Even English people don't know".

"If you ever have to face a situation where suddenly things have changed and you have to go back and all your time here is wasted, doesn't really mean anything then it is quite shocking for you. So there is always that uncertainty and always dependency on my partner that if he stays here I stay here. If he doesn't stay, like, you know, I'm playing somebody else's tune. I can't feel settled."

Some women who participated in the focus groups have not had the opportunity to go to school in their own country and hence are not able to read and write even in their language, which makes it so hard if not impossible to be able to take the required examinations. One woman, who is in her 50's who participated in one of the focus groups said that she did not attend formal education when she was young and has no basic reading and speaking skills in her language let alone in

English. She has been struggling to pass the required examinations and has repeatedly failed; paying huge amounts of money every time she applies and had to keep renewing her spousal visa and pay solicitors fees for her application. In this particular case, not only is this affecting the migrant woman but also her children as she has been informed that her children are not allowed to apply for permanent residency until their mother passes the required examination (Home Office, 2013).

In 2012, the immigration rules also changed extending the "probation period" that migrant women will wait for to apply for permanent residence from two years to five years (Home Office, 2012). This can be another challenge as a woman may have to obtain repeated visa renewals at significant cost before she can apply for her permanent residence. However, it is not only the cost, this "probation period" also has a profound effect on the integration and settling process of many migrant women. As mentioned above many women only start to feel integrated when they are settled in the UK on a permanent basis and have their British

citizenship. Among other things, delaying the process also delays the integration process and contributes to an ongoing and stressful state of anxiety and uncertainty. For women who

are finding it difficult to obtain employment due to employers reacting negatively to their temporary visa status⁹, this further delays the process of obtaining employment.

For others, a concern is also the time it takes to renew their visa and perhaps apply for their permanent application. Some applications take around six months and women struggle to access employment or travel every time their application is due for renewal or change.

“The visa took six months; for six months you have no passport, no visa, no nothing, so you cannot go anywhere, you cannot do anything, you can’t obviously apply for jobs. You don’t even have an ID; you get stopped by immigration in one of these raids they like to do, you have to go home and get the letter that says, ‘Yes, we received your application’, and that’s about it, so there’s a gap there, that they cannot possibly justify.”

3.9 Domestic violence including controlling behaviour from partner or family members

Migrant women, who have been victims of domestic violence and abuse either from their partner, extended family members or both, face additional barriers and challenges in settling in and integrating into life in the UK. For many the abuse consumes their life to such an extent that they could not even start with the process of settling into the UK. They are either highly controlled by the partner or extended family or the abuse affects every aspect of their life so that they are constantly fire fighting. Many do not know of any help that is available to them, some did not even know what the national emergency numbers are for the police or the ambulance services to report the abuse or leave a dangerous situation. One woman said, “I didn’t even know about 999, I was told by some friends after living here for a while”. Another woman said: “Although I’m an educated woman, I can speak the language but I didn’t know what right I had here. It will help maybe to get few sessions when we first came to this country, only for women, without the partners.”

Women in abusive situations are not allowed to go out at all or on their own, make friends, socialise or inquire for information which directly hampers the integration process. One of the women who participated in the focus groups said, “I wanted to go outside and learn about thing, I want to learn new English words and explore. But my in-laws said, ‘No, you can’t go alone, you go with someone’. I said, ‘No, I don’t need anyone’.” Another said, “When I had

⁹ Again the constant changing and tightening of immigration requirements is counter-productive to the process of integration and sets up a conflict between the two policy goals of immigration control and integration (Anthias, 2013).

any communication with other people I had always fear because always he was angry with me and he was kicking me out of the house because I was talking to other people.”

Others are not allowed to work and hence have that crucial exposure to life in the UK and become financially independent. One woman shared her experience, “I was looking for job in job centres but my husband was angry with me, he told me off actually. Because he didn't want me to stand on my own feet and he was screaming and shouting at me. If I haven't had my family probably I would have committed suicide.” Some others are not allowed to attend language courses or are misinformed about the availability of courses. One woman who had such an experience said, “My husband didn't want to pay for the classes, he said that there are no language courses in this town and all the classes are in London. It was when I needed to apply for ILR* it was mandatory so he didn't have a choice”.

“If I have a problem with my husband, in my country, the police don't come in. I am really shocked when they come in and it's like social services and it's like too much for me, I became mad, I am just like, “No”. Even when they tried to contact me... ‘is it the wrong time, can I talk?’ and I am just like ‘who are you?’ ...At first I even thought it's my husband's family trying to trick me. I was just scared....When they want to take my child away, that was the point when I decided. But they were doing everything by English, for the whole year; ...I didn't understand a thing...Once they brought an interpreter and she said, ‘this thing is not right, this girl she speaks Arabic, let me translate the letter by Arabic’. The meeting is a conference meeting and its 12 people around and I am just alone. And when they started to translate the letters for the first time I realised what my ex was saying that, ‘we married for of visa’. He has already ordered to buy ticket and to send me and my child back.”

One woman who called the police after one of the abusive incidents recalls how the police did not help her at all. She said, “They weren't talking to me at all. The first time that we had an incident, they were ok, they were talking to me, and they were asking questions, they were trying to understand what's going on. But the second time they were like, they talked to my husband, they didn't talk to me at all. I didn't even know what they talked about by the way. I was locked in the bathroom because I had to lock myself. They were talking to my husband, I called them and then they were talking to him.”

Since no information was provided to the migrant women at any time before, during or after their arrival, women did not know what rights they have in case they are victims of domestic violence. Most of them find it hard to access the necessary help and indeed in many cases are very afraid of any intervention

due to their previous experiences, what they have been told or cultural differences. It is important to note that this finding applies across a range of women including highly educated and English speaking women.

* Indefinite Leave to Remain or Permanent Residency

Others lack the trust to engage with the police or social services in solving the situation as they are not aware that this help is available to them in this country, especially if they are coming from countries where there is no such assistance from Government agencies. When the women have limited language proficiency the situation becomes even worse unless she is provided with the appropriate language support or culturally appropriate services.

3.10 Overall lack of Information

Although lack of information has been mentioned as a barrier for women in terms of accessing employment, finding out about education and other issues, it is also worth mentioning it as a stand alone challenge that migrant women face in the settling and integration process. This issue was raised repeatedly across the research participants. Many migrant women feel that there is a mistaken assumption that once they are in the UK they will find their way around. There is no well organised and all-encompassing information provided to them as new arrivals.

One woman said, “I am a bit confused, I don’t know what I should do, I’m here but I’m not here because I don’t know what I should do”. Another said, “There isn’t a place where you could go and get guidance, to get a bit of practical advice on life in the UK. And also the lack of any special centre or place to go and ask, to know where you are going. How would you know, where would you go? It would be good if some kind of leaflet is given.” As new arrivals, migrant women coming to the UK as spouses or partners need information on various issues. One woman who still is struggling with the lack of information said, “It’s kind of required of you to go out and find answers to questions that maybe nobody that you know knows. Immigration related, work related, national insurance number, job sort of things and visas.”

Due to the lack of appropriate or useful information, many women feel stuck at home, in a cycle of cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Had they had the right information or support on where to go for advice about the appropriate level of English course, starting work and much more they could be more active making it so much easier for them to integrate into life in the UK.

One woman reflected the views of the vast majority of participants when she said, “I don’t know where to go, because I have asked, where can I get easily guide for this and that, no one could tell me, ‘go and look in that direction’. It would have been helpful if when I got my visa, I was also told where to go. When you come here, you feel really lost. Can we have an information source, some sort of guidance so we can integrate quickly and we are not lost?”

Even women who have internet access and who have a good command of the English language said that they have tried to check various pieces of information on different websites, including Government websites. However, many mentioned that the information

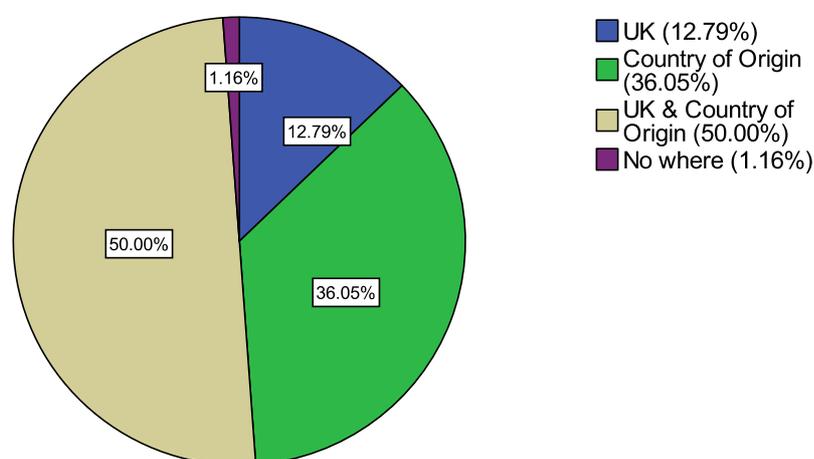
was not clear, adequate or the websites were not user friendly. Often internet forms and processes are totally ill-equipped to reflect the individual and non-generic nature of such women's circumstances. They also said the information provided did not take into account that the reader could be a person without any prior information about the issue as they are new to the country. Indeed, it is notable that most public sector agencies are increasingly hoping to migrate all their services to online as a cost-cutting measure. The experience of this group of women is that this is not an effective system and ultimately therefore will not save money as women's needs remain poorly identified and unmet thrusting them back on the state instead of fostering autonomy and independence.

As has been repeatedly mentioned, most of the information women obtain is either from family members, friends or partner. Some women also try to access information from every source that is available to them. There were some migrant women who regularly go to their local libraries for information, others try and find information in newspapers and information boards in shops and supermarkets. However, as these places are not necessarily designed to provide information to new arrivals or migrants, the chance of finding comprehensive and useful information from these sources is very minimal if not impossible. The situation is even worse with women who have limited English language proficiency and those who have limitations in terms of travelling around, meeting people and those who have few or no social supports around them.

3.11 Belongingness

Related to the integration process one of the research questions posed to the participants was related to the feeling of belongingness; whether they feel they belong in the UK, their country of origin or both. Half of the women (50 percent) who participated in the focus groups felt that they belong both in the UK and their country of origin while around 36 percent feel that they still belong to their country of origin. Only 12.79 percent of the participants felt that they fully belong to the UK.

Figure 24: Feeling of belongingness



The reasons for the difference in feeling of belongingness vary depending on the circumstances of the women including how long they have been in the UK, whether they had opportunities to work, settle and socialise in the UK, the relationship they have with family and friends in their country of origin and how much they feel welcomed by the settled community. One woman for instance who feels she belongs to her country of origin said, “I feel I belong to Algeria as I had a job, friends, family, routine there. Maybe in time once I have those things here I might feel belongingness to the UK.” Another woman also associates the feeling of belongingness with having a comfortable life in the UK. She said, “I might feel I belong to the UK when I speak the language well and have a job and have an easier life”.

Other women feel they belong in both countries; one said, “I have two homes one here and one in my country”. Another said, “India is the motherland and UK is workland”. Another woman who feels she completely belongs to the UK said, “I like the fact that there is more freedom in UK and it is very different to my culture and I feel comfortable.” Another said “I feel 100 percent British”.

“It’s quite liberating to see that it’s a democratic nation. I come from another democratic state but democracy in both countries is practiced in very different ways. They have the right to say anything; like women, we struggle a lot about women’s rights all over the world but here I think it’s quite advanced, they’ve come a long way”.

Different reasons were mentioned from women who feel they belong to the UK; feeling physically safe here (especially those who came from countries where there is civil war or high insecurity), having the rights that many women do not have in their country of origin, respect for human rights and that people respect the privacy of others.

However, some women would say that the feeling of belongingness is not all in their hands.

“It doesn’t matter how much you feel that you’re integrated, if the other party shows you that you are not, it will always feel that you are not integrated.”

Chapter 4: Recommendations from migrant women

Supporting women from the outset: Many of the migrant women who participated in the research emphasised the importance of accessing support and comprehensive information at the start of the migration process. They feel that this would be highly beneficial in the future, both economically and socially. One woman said, “I think the government should obviously think about us ladies who come on spouse visa that we are living long time, permanently. We are not on visiting visa; we are pay the tax and we are thinking about long term life where our children will grow up. Then I think the government could support us to are progress ourselves, if you give us opportunities, then we can prove ourselves”.

Migrant women also say that policy makers who are responsible for immigration policies should also have a responsibility to help those migrants integrate better and feel welcomed. They believe that you cannot allow migrants to come into the UK on the one hand and make it so hard or unfriendly for them to feel settled or integrated in their life here on the other. One woman said, “If you allow migrants into the UK with the hope of opportunities then I think you should create a system that is going to welcome the migrants. I'm here legally, so there is no reason to hold me back. You've taken me in, why not help me to feel settled and part of the system?”

Support around language: Women also think having support and information around language, free or affordable courses is quite crucial in the integration process. One woman said, “I guess it is very important to get the information where they can do an English course or support them to learn the language so they can integrate quickly in the country”. Another said, “We need to have good English so we can start working and making money. But we are needing to pay to do English course and without working its quite hard unless you have a supportive husband, or family, or friend it would be difficult”. Another who is struggling to pay for her English language course said, “I am not asking to have everything for free, but you know, not as expensive as this when we are not working personally”. Some women also stated that until women are capable of communicating in English it would be crucial to provide interpreters and translators especially when they are accessing services such as the GP.

Organisations that support migrant women: Women who are accessing support from organisations that support migrant women feel that these organisations have been their lifeline and without them they will not to be able to settle or integrate in life in the UK. One woman said, “It's important to support organisations like [Name of organisation], because it's easier to get there and to find a sense of community”. Another said, “[Name of organisation] has made a real difference in my life in getting to know people like me, in making friends,

which is a lot easier because you're all migrants, so you're all in the same boat, in a way, and providing help and services, like for example pushing me to go and register with the GP. For me it has been a real positive experience and they've been incredibly helpful, and it has been great, and it has been a fantastic experience”.

Mentoring programmes: Some women also suggested that mentoring programmes could be a great way to help migrant women integrate and having the facility where people could volunteer their time to come and get to know each other could be a great way to help them settle better. One woman said, “I think personally, I mean a migrant like us, really needs a social life, but with not just with expats or immigrants, with British people. I know there are lots of English people who are willing to share, and are interested to know about, our countries, our cultures, even our language. So having, for example, the mentors programme could be helpful; a British person who wants to just exchange experience”. Another said, “It would be helpful to have friendship course, for about two hours, women from different culture could meet each other”.

4.1 Good Practice

This research also sought to identify some better or promising practice. Some examples are included below most of which reflect precisely the demands of the women as outlined in their recommendations above. In a number of cases the projects cited are also funded by the European Integration Fund.

The Latin American Womens Rights Service (LAWRS) currently run an excellent volunteer programme which has been designed to help women improve their prospects of getting a job, develop new skills, increase work opportunities, make new friends and give something back to the community they live in. The project's goal is to develop the volunteers skills, especially if they think their background and experience are not recognised in this country. The programme offers work experience, workshops and seminars within and outside the organisation, tailor made support, opportunities to increase networking, support to find a job, support learning English and a reference at the end. A couple of the women interviewed for this research were currently volunteering with LAWRS and commented on how important this opportunity was to them and how much they have gained from it.

Klevis Kola: Finding suitable stable employment that utilises the skills and talents of the woman coming to settle in the UK remains a large barrier. The Klevis Kola Foundation recognises this and in 2012 after much demand, started running weekly cooking workshops where women from different backgrounds could come together, develop their cooking skills and share recipes. The workshops were very popular and many of the women expressed an interest in taking their culinary talents forward and utilising them to create an income. Based on this, the cooking project began providing support and training so they could develop a catering business using a social enterprise model. The project offered training courses such

as food hygiene, customer service, business and marketing to those interested in forming part of the project. They have now gone on to successfully create a catering company called 'Chickpea Sisters' who have catered for weddings, conferences, community events and fundraisers. Allowing these women to utilise their skills and create income in what can be a daunting and unfamiliar economic environment where their qualifications are often not recognised.

The Links Project: Many women commented on the lifeline community centres play when they first arrive in the UK in terms of providing important information and knowledge coupled with an opportunity to meet new people and have a chat. The Links Project in Hastings is a particularly good example of a project based at a community centre that has played a pivotal role in helping newly arrived migrant women settle. The Links Project is a multi agency partnership that provides support and advice for the excluded BME population living in Hastings and Rother. The project is delivered through a drop-in and gives access to a range of service such as health, welfare benefits, immigration and education. Some of the women commented they didn't know where they would be if it weren't for this weekly drop in providing them with the advice and information they needed.

Europa Diversa which is run by Newry and Mourne District Council offers free training which builds on the capacity of newly arrived migrants to become involved in civic, community and political life. Their programme aims to build the capacity of participants through specific workshops and information sessions. They have run sessions on subjects like how to set up a business in Northern Ireland, how to identify funding sources and complete funding application forms for Ethnic Minority Community Groups and they have provided media training for BME community groups. The project also runs capacity building for elected members and officials which aims to create awareness and understanding of the needs of non-EU migrants, the barriers they face, and actions that can be undertaken to support their involvement in civic, community and political life. They then offer a project which brings the two groups of individuals together in a shadowing programme with migrants being paired with elected members/officials which provides the perfect platform for an exchange of ideas and gives the shadow a real insight into the daily workings of the local government and elected members.

The Befriending Project: The befriending programme, run by Learning Unlimited as part of their Active Citizenship and English programme, aims to do as the name suggests. It brings together third country national women who have recently arrived in the UK with women who are now settled in the UK with the hope of building a platform where the two women can exchange knowledge and form a friendship. Before the pairing begins the befriender will attend a five session training programme and the learner will be briefed on what to expect from the programme. Once they have been paired up, the befriender and learner organise activities together with the aim to help the learner feel supported and more comfortable in their new community. The befriender shares their local knowledge of the community and will

try to answer any questions that may arise. The programme organisers arrange regular keeping in touch meetings to monitor how the pairing is going and offer support to both parties.

Local authority – Southwark: One London local authority for instance, has identified the different ‘new population’ groups in the borough and has commissioned different pieces of research to look into the needs of these groups. The research looked in detail into the different needs the groups could have including, housing, health & social care, education, employment and community safety. The council also works closely with local voluntary organisations and has a community engagement team. The team held a focus group with ethnic minority women, including migrant women to understand the challenges they face while living in the local area.

Local authority – Bracknell: Another local authority in the Southeast of England, although it does not have a specific migrants’ strategy, it has a couple of documents; community cohesion strategy and equality scheme that are relevant to migrants and integration in their local area. The local authority engages with a particular group of migrants; the Ghurkha community which has a high presence in their area. This local authority is also one of the very few local authorities who have a ‘Welcome Pack’ to new residents which is translated into Nepali and other locally used languages.

Chapter 5: Findings Part II

As indicated above, this section of the findings reflects the focus groups and women's views on some of the more abstract concepts. When discussing integration and belongingness, women often had quite similar ideas and this research draws on these shared views to formulate a summary of what integration means to women.

Their views on gender are very varied so they are not included with a view to drawing a particular conclusion. However, they can provide an insight into the complexity of the question, the way in which different women's own contexts and circumstances may influence and shape their views and may provide avenues for further research.

5.1 Women's understanding of "integration"

One of the objectives of this research was to find out what integration means to migrant women, what they think it entails and how they define it. Most of the discourse around integration, and definition of it, is heavily focused on what policy makers think it is and in some cases what the settled community feels it should be. As integration has been defined as a 'two way process' it was crucial for the research not only to describe what the literature or policy definition is but also how migrant women define it and understand it. Below are the main issues that have been raised around the definition of integration and what it entails.

A process: Many of the migrant women who participated in the research agreed that integration is a very individual process and will differ from woman to woman depending on her background, circumstances before and after migrating to the UK, and her personality. However, all agreed that it is a process and it takes a considerable amount of time and women cannot be expected to be integrated immediately after arrival to the UK. As one woman said, "At least, for an average woman, of course depending on the individual; where you come from and what your abilities are but, I mean, at least a few years, to really feel that you are integrated. For me, it took me few years to understand what's going on, how things work and how people work here".

In terms of estimating how long it takes for a woman to integrate women feel that it could take between a few years to about ten years. For some women, for instance, they say they will need to start from some of the basic issues like having a good command of the English language. One of the migrant women who was attending a language course said, "First of all I will need to begin with the language. If I can speak it, if I can at least communicate with people on a daily basis and understand the system a bit, how things work, it's really essential."

Independence: For a lot of women being financially independent, having employment and being part of the working and contributing section of society is very crucial for the integration process and they define integration in those terms. When asked what integration means to her, one woman said, “For me to feel fully integrated, I would just like to get my career situation worked out. As soon as I am working, get my career off the ground and then I would probably feel completely integrated”.

For others it’s about generally being independent and being able to do things on their own without being reliant on someone else. One woman who has recently arrived in the UK said, “It’s a hard to tell now, because I don’t know when I’ll be able to do all things by myself. I don’t want someone to dictate things to me”. Another who has lived in the UK for three years said, “When I first came in its very difficult for me, but now I have passed three years, I feel better, I can go outside alone, for shopping, for everything. It will take some time, but when I also find a job, then I feel that I’m integrated”.

Social life: For many migrant women integration entails an understanding of the British culture and lifestyle. They want to be actively involved and to participate in it to feel fully integrated. Having a social life and being able to make British friends was considered significant in the integration

“To be honest with you, when I can find British friends, when I go out with my friends and get to know their culture, this is really important to me.”

process as it contributed to ‘feeling connected to the society’ and adds to ‘feeling secure and comfortable’ in your life. One woman said, “You need to understand the culture that you’re in and to be able to survive in it, basically. Find your way to do your own stuff and also adopt”. Another said, “Integration for me is to understand their culture, culture of British society, to know their lifestyle, to accept their culture, accept their lifestyle, the way they are, and try to mix with them. So for me, it’s important to mix with them and try to be friendly with them.” This was reiterated by another woman who said, “I feel that if I have a bigger social circle and more friends and more things to spend my spare time with, I will be happier and I will feel settled”.

Preserving identity and equal

treatment: For many women, having an inclusive life in the UK without losing their identities is also very crucial in the integration process. One woman said, “Your identity is so dear to you that you hold on to it, but at the same time I don’t want that to be held against me. I want to be equal, I want to do the same things that people do, I want to go to the same places

“It doesn’t matter how much you feel that you’re integrated, if the other party shows you that you are not, it will always feel that you are not integrated. You feel they don’t want me here. Of course, I mean, I should do more, maybe, because I am the one coming here ... If they always see me as a foreigner, as an immigrant, then I cannot really feel integrated, it’s impossible”.

and I want to enjoy the same things. I don't want to be singled out because of my nationality; I just want to be the same as the British. When I achieve that, I'm going to say I'm fully integrated." Another woman agreed and described when she would feel integrated by saying, "That moment when you actually are not perceived by the other person as different."

The issue of being treated equally and being accepted by the settled community was emphasised repeatedly by many of the migrant women. They believe that it should be a two way process and if one party is not willing to engage in that process, there could not be integration.

Residence status: In addition to being accepted and treated equally by the settled community some women also feel that having a British passport will make them feel integrated as that will confirm that they are equal to any British citizen and could fully participate in any aspect of life without limitation.

"You know, if you're not British citizen then even though you speak perfect language and you're ok with everything, when you apply for something or you need something, they make you feel that you're not part of society, you feel like more temporary. So then you say 'until I become a British citizen, I am not settled here', that is how they make you feel".

"The only thing that I would really like is just the security of, my visa is mine, that it's not dependent on somebody else ... The UK is my life now and I like that life, its scary that if something happens with my husband I would have to leave when I have contributed so much to this society already."

Another woman who is worried about her immigration status said, "Too much thinking about papers, papers, papers, first of all, when I have my documents that I can live in this country, I can start to feel integrated".

Political participation: Other women will want to integrate not only socially in Britain but to have a deep understanding of the political system; to understand how it works both at the local and national level. One woman who participated in one of the focus groups said that she is quite interested in the political system of the country and feels it is quite important for migrant women to understand and follow policies in general and around migrants in particular and try and actively engage in the process so that they will feel part of the society they live in. They should

understand their rights and responsibilities and how the different policies of different political parties affect them as migrants and ultimately impact on their integration into life in the UK. Some of the women also say that being able to vote and taking part in the democratic process will make them feel part of the society and integrated. One woman said, "Of course. If I were allowed to vote I would feel much more welcome here".

Some of the definitions and descriptions of integration from the migrant women who participated in this research were all rounded and emphasised the various crucial elements of integration. Below are some examples.

To summarise it could be said that migrant women who participated in this particular research defined or described integration as:

“I think there are three parts to integration. I think number one is having the ability to participate in the cultural, social, economic and political system. Number two would be to have the ability to accept, the cultural norms, rules and regulations of the system that you're part of. Number three would be, being able to create your own space in a system that initially had no space for you. So coming here and making it your own, you know? I think that would be integration for me as an all encompassing definition.”

- A process that takes a considerable amount of time
- A process that depends on the available opportunities and personal traits of an individual
- An opportunity to have a fulfilled life, with complete independence; including financial independence
- An opportunity to be an active contributing member of society; socially and politically.
- Being comfortable and at ease, and not being made to feel like a foreigner;
- Being accepted by the settled community but retaining your own identity, being, treated as equals and having a social life that includes British people.

5.2 Gender

Many of the barriers to integration discussed in this research could apply to any migrant irrespective of whether they are male or female. In some cases, however, there may be disproportionate or specific impacts on either sex or on the relationship between partners which are related to gender hierarchies, norms and stereotypes. The extent to which individuals perceive their experience as having specifically gendered, or indeed race related consequences may vary depending on their contexts and on the sensitisation and awareness of gender and race politics.

This research focussed specifically on women coming to the UK on spousal or partner visas. In all but one case this was women coming to join a male partner; there was one lesbian relationship in the sample. There was not the scope to look in detail at the profile of the UK spouses or partners women came to join or at how her migration experience had impacted on the partner. However, during the course of interviews and focus groups, women quite often made points which, though not necessarily aimed at addressing the gendered nature of their experience, did in fact have a specific relevance to gender, migration and integration.

In addition, one of the questions that was discussed with women was the extent to which they felt that, were situations reversed and it was a male coming to join a UK spouse/partner, his experience would resemble or differ from hers. While it would not be possible to draw conclusions from these discussions, it is deemed appropriate to reference some of the responses as of interest to the gender, migration and integration nexus.

Women's sacrifices and risks

Women coming to the UK on spousal visas are doing so primarily to join their spouse but also with hopes that they will have a new and exciting experience, meet new people and learn new things. They often hope that they will have good opportunities to either continue or to grow their education and employment opportunities and to be able to give their children the best chances in life.

However, many of these women already had excellent qualifications and a good career in their home countries. They had a social network, they had contacts and friends and, crucially, in many cases they had an extended family network that provided not only emotional support but practical support around issues such as child care.

Leaving all this behind and coming to “start from scratch,” as is the case for so many, is a huge risk. The fact that the UK seems to be particularly poor at valuing qualifications and experience from overseas and seems to perceive visa status and non-native English language speakers as problematic means that often women do not realise just how high a hurdle they may have to jump if they are not to lose ground in their career.

In some instances, women's partners originally went to the woman's country of origin to try and make a life with her there but because this has proved difficult for him she has agreed to return or come to the UK with him instead, often losing hard fought advances.

As we have highlighted, women rely very heavily on personal relations and interaction for their mental and to some extent physical well-being. Child care is a huge barrier to accessing education, volunteering, employment or a social life. Leaving behind a closer family and social network and coming to a country that is intensely private, reserved and places a premium on privacy, independence and self-sufficiency – means women with children risk losing a great deal when coming to the UK on a spousal visa.

Equality, rights and safety

Equality, rights and safety were important to women but they had mixed views on what this meant in reality in the UK. There was a general acceptance that the UK had been a leader in standing up for human rights, but some women could see that this was not universally applied in practice. As one woman said regarding issues of prejudice and immigration status, “Before we have heard UK's human rights is very easy. I don't see that. Human – what is

human?” In particular many women felt that in practice access to basic rights ended up being conditional. This in part explains why so many women assumed they would only feel “integrated” once they obtained ILR or even a British passport which they thought would be their route to demand and enforce equality of treatment.

Some women described general unfriendliness and in some cases prejudice and racism, but some women – predominantly those in London rather than outside the capital, quite often talked about the fact that it is a multicultural society with room for all people and all beliefs but now here I am “surprised that no one have any problem, I mean whether they are Hindu, Muslims, they all live together, they are friends and everything. This thing is surprised me.” Outside London there was a notably different take on multiculturalism: “No, not is Southampton, it might be easier in other cities!... Because there aren’t very many um, I don’t know multicultural sense in the community I guess. Um, I feel like there is a little bit of isolation um...”

A different view was expressed by a number of Muslim women however who experienced hostility towards both themselves and to their children: “I expected that when I will come here and say that I am from middle-east, I will be happy but when I came here, I am afraid to say that I am from, I prefer not to say because I didn’t see that British people like Arabic or like Muslims”.

Concerning safety, there were extremely mixed views with some women feeling very safe: “woman is safe, I like very much” and others, quite the reverse: “Safety here very less for ladies, can’t go alone in the evening time, in dark time, in night time, it’s go to very difficult late night...”

For some women this impacted on either their own, or their husband and family’s sense, of what was viable, safe and appropriate for women to do in the way of work. In some cases this was used by controlling partners to deter women from exercising their freedoms and choices. Some of the women in this sample had experienced considerable domestic violence from controlling and abusive husbands and families. In such instances there had been deliberate attempts to prevent her from accessing education, English classes, volunteering and employment, information, social life, finances and transport.

“But here it’s different, I mean the way they are brought up here, they grow with this ideology that sharing the work is more important, because it’s both their right. It’s the right of each to enjoy their life, either. That’s not there in back home... The situation is like, the wife is taking care of the children, so they really understand that. But we can see the man like more working and helpful than back home. It’s different here”.

Several women said that they felt that the UK had achieved a great deal in safeguarding women’s rights and equality between women and men. Some felt that the fact that UK lifestyles mean people do not have extended family networks around them means that in some cases men have learned to share household and caring responsibilities as it is not possible for the spouse alone to complete these traditionally female roles.

Some women referenced the sense of freedom and the range of opportunities that were open to women and girls here. , “...When I came here, because it’s very different culture, I like it, because here there is freedom for women, here, and lots of opportunities, like job and going out everywhere we can go. So I like it”. However this was not routinely the case. It was interesting that women from other countries, where equality was also held to be an established principle such as China, Korea and North America, expressed surprise and shock at some of the inequalities in British society, and felt that gender did not or should not matter but that migration experiences would or should be similar. Some women commented specifically with reference to issues of wealth distribution and found the fact that wealth impacted on access to, and quality of, education was very surprising, “I heard about the education, education is best in the world for the children but, but...er...but they say private school is better than public, it is very different.”

In terms of gender relations between men and women, one woman was very shocked at how rigidly adherence and conformity to stereotyped and outdated gender norms were enforced in the UK. She gave this example, “I feel like being a woman here is a little bit different than being a woman in the United States. Like when you're, you know, out renting a house with friends, um, in the countryside or something, all of the women cook everything, clean everything, by hand and the men just sit there.”

Situations reversed

When asked how the experience might have compared for a male spouse coming to the UK, some found this difficult to answer as it is obviously hypothetical and requires quite a leap of imagination.

Many women felt it would be as hard, or indeed harder, for men but interestingly their rationale for this to some extent replicated existing gender norms. For instance, although many women talked about how difficult they found it being dependent on a man, yet in

answer to this question many women empathised more with men. They felt it would be harder for a man to be in a dependent situation. “Because in our society man is, what’s it? Bread provider yeah that. So for them it is a little bit hard, there is a big challenge.” Women recognised that this may represent a challenge to his sense of masculinity and status. “Because he will feel, you know mentality, human being, depending on her, it would be harder”.

One woman recounted a discussion she had had with two young men from her home country [Bangladesh] married to British women, “Oh it’s too difficult, like settled here, settling here, our wives they are British and they treat us like we are prisoner’ ... ‘we don’t have – we can’t adjust like a girl, girls are very like, don’t take too much time for adjusting in some places, but we take so much time for adjusting in this country.”

Many women also felt that it was very difficult for men because he would face similar problems with English language and employment, but he has significant responsibilities to provide for his family so this was added pressure, “But when I am man, then I, my responsibility take my children, take my wife”. Many of them felt there is less of an expectation on women to work and provide. They felt that men and women equally face under-employment and a devaluation of their skills and experience with migrants having to take any work rather than work that represented a continuation, let alone an advance, in their career development.

One woman stressed that issues of hostility, racism and fear towards men would be worse and that there was much less support for men than for women.

Participants felt that accessing employment was difficult for all migrants. Some felt it may be slightly easier for women as there are many opportunities in female dominated fields of work such as cleaning, catering and waitressing, care, retail assistants and volunteering. Indeed some women had been told it would be easy for them in such roles as they are attractive! “Yes, because, one of my husband’s friends told me, ‘don’t worry, you’re a woman, you’re quite good looking, so you’re going to get the job straightaway’... men’, she told me, ‘men have to, you know, get a job with different skills and not be good looking’.”

“Because men are very... Yeh sexist. ... It would be more difficult....Because they think that they are the best, they are men, umm that is a Brazilian expression, umm the final word is the men’s word“.

“No I think for men now not easy, for men harder because I think this country woman more have respect, yes, I think. For when my husband came here first time he, for him was very awful, haven’t home, he was homeless, he was without food, I don’t know... woman easier, yes, because for woman we have more helper, we can ask anybody for help and anybody help us...Not, for men - difficult because some people scared men....Because nobody from woman can be serial killer.”

However women recognised that this may be replicating stereotypes and lead to low pay, part time work and underemployment for many skilled women. One woman concurring, said, “Well I guess it would depend on what kind of job. If I was a waitress maybe that would be fine, but if I want to be an engineer then back to square one, I know, because I’ve been trying to get a job and I wish it was easy. Maybe I should post a picture on my CV... I don’t know. But if you want a qualified job that pays a good wage, it’s not easy if you’re a woman.”

Other women, again perhaps replicating gender stereotypes about division of labour, felt it was easier for men because, while they may not want to, they could do any work including shift work late at night and heavy manual labour. The implication here is that this is not appropriate or safe for women. “When men will come in UK, he can go outside, he can do anything, like job, but woman can’t do any job. Woman can’t just start a job, she has to think which job is suitable for her or not, like to go outside, and he can... I think a man has more confident as compared to a woman”.

A number of women also felt that it was significantly easier for men because they had complete freedom of movement and association, “For men, it is much easier. Men have more freedom, they could find friends more easily and they could go in bars and cafes”.

One highlighted that personal safety was again a factor, “But I mean, for men they can basically do any jobs without feeling unsafe because for women they know that you're vulnerable so you can never know what people might do.”

“She said I think they’re going to have easier life because they’re men. She said, as a mum, you can’t run away, you can’t step out of the life. But if you don’t have children, it’s different story. If you are single and you are abroad, it’s another story. But if you are men, after all suffering, when if you see difficulties, you will go and look for a better life. They will not stay”.

Several mentioned that it may be more difficult for them as the burden of caring and housework still falls predominantly on women. However, they also highlighted that a woman is most unlikely to walk away from these responsibilities even if the situation becomes very trying and difficult whereas they felt that men would just leave.

Many highlighted that the fact that women have to do everything here themselves with no help – work, learn English, look after

house and family and that – can pose additional barriers for women’s participation. “But everything do by yourself. So here is more busy than Pakistan, especially for a woman, because they have to do work, housework as well, and go outside for jobs and children and everything, so it’s quite rushy life.”

On a related point some women felt that men may be more naturally confident and outgoing and this would help generally but specifically given that participants felt the onus was on the migrant to reach out. Indeed in the focus groups a range of connected issues had been

highlighted. Many women felt they needed help with CV and interviews and to learn to put themselves forward. It was also notable that when women were saying what would be their advice to other women in their situation – they vehemently stressed that it was vital to take the initiative and be independent. You could not be shy, you could not hide away, you had to put yourself out there, as one woman said, “the word no, is not permitted”. This is challenging for many individuals and again may be more of a cultural leap for certain women than others.

One participant of South American heritage who was highly educated, with a good career history, spoke good English and was very engaged in issues of race and gender politics, made some interesting observations about her experience from both race and gender perspectives. She had made a choice not to take her British husband’s name and wondered if this was the reason she was not being invited to interview. “I was asking myself, do I need to change my last name to write my CV?”

This reflected the fact that a number of participants felt that where the country of origin was not an EU country; a country that had a colonial or historical UK connection; or a developing country, they felt there was an added layer of discrimination, incomprehension, and lack of acceptance of their right to be in the UK.

South American women highlighted what they considered to be rather snide remarks and sexist and racist assumptions about marrying a British man.

A few participants felt that the current immigration rules around family reunion and spousal visas are extremely backward in their effect on gender relations and entrench inequality. They felt that the income threshold to bring in a spouse was such that it was more likely to be a male who had disposable income.

“ ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, I’ve got a residents’ permit, because, that is a point, because I got married and because with a UK citizen. After that, she told me, ‘Oh, good for you – congratulations, very handy’. ‘What’s that?’ Very handy? I mean... Sometimes I say, if my husband would be in the same situation in my country, they wouldn’t say that, you know.... I think the difference is mainly that no one would think that a man got married to a British citizen, a woman, for the visa, and they do assume that because you’re a woman, oh yes, you’re a visa seeker, you just wanted to find someone that’s European, so you can marry him and come to UK”.

“Because first of all that law is discriminating the right of British people to choose who is going to be their partner in life, and also because they – the only people who are going to be able to get married with a overseas person, they are going to be medium class or more than medium class, it’s something about classes, you know. If you are rich you have the right to choose a spouse from abroad, what’s that? “And, and, and, and the salary threshold makes it almost most women cannot marry a non-EU national and then sponsor them to come here because like 63% of women fall below...”

“So, it reinforced that norm of like men buy brides and that’s a thing that I’m sort of like...”

They described the situation as a form of importing, or buying and selling women.

Again, this perhaps reflects the findings from the literature review that government policies and assumptions about who the spouses are is not grounded in reality.

It is not appropriate to assume that they neither want nor are able to undertake employment, or to assume that they will be stay at home wives and mothers. Nor is it appropriate to assume that they are passive addenda to their husbands, or assume that they will find out everything they need to know from their husbands.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Our findings, to an extent, mirror previous research concerning the barriers to integration for migrants generally. There is less research on the experience of integration of women on spousal visas, but here again our findings are broadly in line with existing research.

Our findings highlight the heterogeneity and agency of women on spousal visas. A remarkable feature is how highly qualified they are and how much work experience they have – most of which is under-valued, disregarded and wasted at potentially significant cost to the public purse. They are all willing and eager to learn English, work and also volunteer, have British friends and be self-sufficient. These appear to also be Government's requirements of migrants, but many policy measures, whether intentionally or otherwise, work precisely against these supposedly shared aims.

While our findings demonstrate that women share many of the policy makers' ideas about what constitutes "integration", they may weight them very differently. The fact that personal relationships, informal support networks and interaction is so key to women's well being for instance really stands out.

The lack of such essential support has detrimental effects on a women's mental health with many women suffering isolation, boredom and depression. It also can have damaging practical implications too. It is often the networks and contacts that can help women navigate and open doors to opportunities. Without such support, informal or shared and liberating burdens around childcare can not be established and so this can mean even if a woman learns of an opportunity, she cannot take it up. Women may find themselves far too thinly stretched with no help to turn to as they have to do everything themselves. They are trying to improve their situation in the UK (job hunting for example, accessing English classes and education opportunities) and in some cases also trying to fulfil more traditional roles with the home and family.

Our findings also point to the fact that despite the rhetoric of integration being a two-way process, in the UK the onus is on the migrants to be self-sufficient, independent, extroverted, proactive and confident. This is difficult enough for most, but may be particularly difficult for some women, yet they show great determination and spirit in rising to the challenge. What is concerning is that even should they attempt such a persona, their best efforts may be to no avail or indeed rebuffed or met with derision among the UK population. This is a painful rejection which can cause a sense of failure and a loss of self-confidence. Most women still make plenty of friends, just not British ones, but the danger is that in the populist immigration agenda this is held against them as though it is they who have not tried to "integrate".

These factors combine with a woman's dependent immigration status which results in her being entirely reliant on her partner and his family in all aspects of her life. This puts pressure on the relationship. It is an intense burden on the partner but it is also very demeaning and incapacitating for the dependent spouse. It can mean she does not have access to accurate information or appropriate services; can prevent her accessing opportunities, and, in some cases, can foster abusive and controlling tendencies in a potential perpetrator. It is counter-productive to Government's professed aim of fostering autonomous and independent migrants and is likely to result ultimately in generating costs to the public purse.

Our findings suggest that it is not enough to assume that women on spousal visas will just have to 'get on with it' when they arrive and that their partner will help them navigate the system. This is not a true reflection of who these spouses are and what their needs are. It also ignores the very real difference that a strategic, evidence-based, targeted policy can make in helping to shape effective and appropriate measures and projects. They may not need to be hugely expensive or onerous but could make a substantial difference – not only to the individual's life but to the local economy and community.

Overall, our findings would suggest that there is a powerful "Invest-to-Save" argument to be made in terms of supporting this group of women. The measures we suggest are mostly not costly but could make a very significant difference to women's integration. This would ultimately mean this group of women rapidly becomes economically active and contributing. They would be mentally, physically and emotionally healthy and satisfied and they would know their way around, feel comfortable and in a stronger position to support and rear her children – all measures that will reduce and prevent reliance on the state.

Recommendations

- a) Local authorities need to undertake more detailed research about the demographics of the populations. What are their strengths and talents that could be harnessed to local benefit? Are there particular needs that could be met with the introduction of targeted measures or projects?
- b) Local authorities could offer voluntary and interning options to migrants to help provide them with appropriate UK employment experience. They could charge them with relevant actions such as preparing information packs, researching the needs of the community, linking up migrant women with services, clubs, activities and organisations and helping to broker befriending and mentoring relationships.

Employment, volunteering and further education

There is a need to integrate specialist advice for migrants and employers around employment, education and volunteering into existing or new services that deliver careers advice and employment support. Involving migrants in the design and delivery of such services would be appropriate. As so many migrant women are highly qualified with extensive employment experience, this help could very quickly facilitate her access to employment making her economically contributing to the State.

Specialist advice and support, available whether or not the individual is on benefits and provided with face to face (not only online) engagement¹⁰:

- a) Aimed at migrants to provide assistance and advice on CVs and interview skills in a UK cultural context.
- b) Migrants and employers to publicise UK Naric and ensure better understanding and respect of qualifications.
- c) Migrants and employers to help identify what education and training opportunities are available, which ones are most appropriate and how to go about this.
- d) Employers to help them to understand the different visas and so to encourage and facilitate employment and volunteering of migrants
- e) Employers and migrants to establish a jobs or skills match that can place migrants in suitable employment and volunteering roles that are consonant with their qualifications, experience and career development.
- f) Migrants about how to go about setting up your own business and ideally providing seed capital loans to do so.
- g) Both migrants and employers about the gold standard in providing volunteering opportunities that are beneficial to both parties.

Language

As highlighted in the literature review, there is evidence that language is key to integration in several domains. The earlier a woman can achieve success in language, the sooner she is likely to obtain employment and be economically contributing. Equally, the sooner she is comfortable with the language the more she is likely to be able to develop a social, political

¹⁰ Government departments (DCLG, DBIS, DFES, DWP) could draft some guidance around this ask. It may be that they would locate a service in JCP or other public service branches or link up with recruitment and employment agencies though the service would need to be free of a profit making incentive.

and fulfilling life averting the potentially costly outcomes of loneliness, boredom, depression and isolation.

- a) It is essential to continue to provide quality, professional, independent translation and interpretation services to enable equal access to safety, justice and basic rights.
- b) From the start of the migration process, (pre-departure as well as immediate arrival,) women need to be informed about and able to access appropriate language courses.
- c) These courses should be free. They should be linked to childcare provision and should be considered as an economic investment to the future as many of these women intend to settle in the UK and will be financially contributing earlier if they have the language skills.
- d) Language classes need to assess and meet differing needs both in terms of learner proficiency and their ability to learn – from basic conversation through to exams and understanding cultural interactions of the British.
- e) Language classes need to be scrutinised and subject to rigorous evaluation to ensure that they are not unscrupulous, exploitative or sub-standard.

Accessing services

Many of the points arising under accessing services can be addressed through the incorporation of relevant information in information packs as detailed at appendix I.

- a) Before or immediately on arrival migrants should be informed about the whole range of health care services (not just GP and A&E), how to enrol; and how to use them. They need to be clear as to what they will be entitled to, what is free and what they need to pay for or have insurance for. They also need to be informed of their rights to have culturally specific provision e.g. access to professional interpreters and access to a female practitioner.
- b) At the earliest possible stage, ideally prior to departure, migrants should be advised as to what documentation will be helpful to them including the full range of education certificates, any history of paying bills or tax, and, as soon as arriving, establishing addresses that can be provided in evidence for opening bank accounts, etc. Banks, utility companies and other businesses and local authority departments should be advised on alternative evidence that they should accept so as to be receptive to migrants' needs and circumstances which will hasten their ability to be independent.

Social life

- a) Mentoring and befriending schemes could go a long way, at relatively low cost, towards facilitating the development of a social life for migrant women. It would seem logical to have such services delivered by a combination of former, settled, migrants and UK British community members. Again this may be something that local authorities and voluntary sector could facilitate.
- b) There needs to be adequate funding to organisations that support migrant women, who have been described in this research as a 'lifeline'. This is not necessarily resource intensive – as was seen in this research, simply a coffee morning once a week was a valued service (though now one which is at risk in the cuts.)
- c) There is some need to raise awareness among the British population of just how difficult migrant women have found it to make friends with specifically British people. Many British would be saddened to learn this is how they are experienced and may be very prepared to develop a more open approach.

Information

Information, or lack of it, has been one of the major issues raised across the research on different aspects of life and domains of integration. The overall lack of information on every aspect of life in the UK and the undue expectation of availability of information in the informal sector is unhelpful to women and can impede and delay women as they try to "Settle In" which of course just delays achieving the independence that would reduce the burden on the state, or make her economically and socially productive to the state. This lack of information can be dangerous and potentially costly when women are misinformed or deprived of information. As the research found one example of a woman who did not know NHS was free so delayed attending the surgery for several months, which meant that when she finally accessed health care the cost to the state was greater.

While information packs may seem rather simple and even old fashioned they are relatively cheap but could have a big impact, hasten her integration and therefore financially benefit the state. Information becomes out of date very quickly, but a well designed pack could allow for this and retain its utility and applicability without needing constant correction and updates. Such packs could be designed jointly with settled migrants. Local authorities, community centres, FE colleges and voluntary sector would be well placed to do this sort of project.

- a) All research participants felt 'Information Packs' should be provided to women at point of arrival or when they receive their spousal or partner visa.
- b) The information in the packs should be all encompassing, easy to read and, when possible, available in different languages.

- c) Information should not only be accessible online.
- d) There is an initial, not exhaustive list of the sorts of information that a pack may need to cover at appendix I

Immigration

Most of the recommendations that this report would suggest for immigration relate to areas of immigration policy and law that are unlikely to be receptive to change. For instance, this research finds that the cost of repeated visa extensions and renewals is too onerous. This increases pressure on couples and prevents them making financial savings that could be spent on things that facilitate childcare, education, and language classes. It finds that the English Language test and Life in the UK test are in principle sensible measures but need to be significantly adapted, flexible and free as otherwise they act as an impediment to integration, rather than support. It finds that constant changes, complexity and vastness of immigration law create huge insecurity and uncertainty not only for the women but for any services they may interact with on their integration journey such as housing, employers, FE and HE colleges, public services. Our findings identify residency requirements, probation periods, no recourse provisions, financial surcharges and thresholds all as barriers for integration generally and in some cases disproportionately for women. Any of these would be the subject of recommendations but the only point that we specifically make relates to the no recourse requirement.

A number of participants had suffered domestic violence. This, however, is not specific to this population –one in four women in the UK have experienced domestic violence. However, the difference for this group of women is that her immigration status, her dependence on her spouse and the application of the no recourse to public funds rule act as facilitators to the abuse. For women suffering domestic violence this becomes the all-consuming fact in their lives and integration and personal development is a pipe-dream until this issue is resolved. Some participants highlighted that the domestic violence concession had been a lifeline. This report would urge that future governments retain the domestic violence concession and enhance it so that all women affected by domestic violence in the UK, irrespective of their country of origin or visa status or financial assets, are able to equally access safety and justice.

Next Steps

It is intended that this research inform government and voluntary sector policy and practice at national and local level and may be inspire organisations to consider setting up appropriate projects and providing information and services.

Avenues for future research include the interaction between immigration status and women's health, the combined effect for women of gender and immigration status on her and her children. Still more detailed analysis of the gendered impact of this migration experience on spousal/partner and extended family relationships and how it affects performance of gender is needed and longitudinal studies tracking the migration journey of women are also much needed.

Appendix I

Information pack

Language

What sorts of language classes are available, how to find out about them, how to know if a course is appropriate and good quality, entitlement to free courses, questions to ask a provider when considering enrolling – e.g. provision of child care, refunds if the course is inappropriate, flexibility in timing.

Employment in the UK

Where to go to look for work, how to prepare CV and interview in a UK context, negotiating with a potential employer, employer and employee rights and obligations, services and systems in the case of employment disputes, trade unions, professional associations, building networks to access employers

Education

For migrants themselves there needs to be information about further and higher education including vocational courses and qualifications and (post)graduate study – how to find out about courses, how to assess for quality, fees, accommodation support, student discounts, mature student support, married accommodation, crèches, student unions, how to apply and enrol,

Children

The UK school system, laws and policies on education, information about nursery, crèche, childcare options, free childcare and entitlements, cost of childcare, standards, safety and laws around child welfare and child protection, information about options around types of schooling, when children need to be enrolled, how to go about this and when to start preparing this given the crush for places, how to access specialist educational support if needed, the exam system and how to help a child move on from school to college or university.

Health

How to access health services, rights and entitlements, different parts of the health system – maternity, midwives, health visitors, mental health, GP, hospitals, public/private, dentistry, counselling etc. and making good use of community and patient practice groups and pharmacies as well as GPs and A and E

Transport

The transport system in the UK

How to use overseas driving licences

Steps needed to obtain a UK driving licence

Legislation and common practice in UK transport and road rules

Emergency services

Police, ambulance, fire and coastguard services – their contact details and how and when to use them.

Social life

Information about socialising in the UK and how to find out, join or set up – activities and localities such as gardening clubs, dog walking clubs, walking groups, book groups, pubs, cafes, libraries, community centres, comedy clubs, live music venues, arts and theatre, religious establishments, gyms, leisure centres and fitness clubs, local societies – sports centres – football, cricket, netball, tennis teams, amateur dramatics, youth centres, parks. Also information about media – print, broadcast radio and television.

Local Government and key public services

Information about the different layers, functions and responsibilities of local government, what to expect from it and what is expected of the migrant (council tax, voting register etc.), Information about the most public facing functions to help migrants see them as a resource not a threat and to ensure migrants know where to turn for advice, support and rights – housing, environment, social services, police, health, benefits.

Democracy and Civil Society

Information about what rights to vote a migrant has and when. Information about how and when to engage in consultations and make use of local councillors and MPs etc., Information about how to hold the state, public services and corporations to account – complaints mechanisms, ombudsman, offices of inspection etc., Information about civil society organisations and legalities around demonstrations, protests, marches and other civil society action.

Other support services and information.

Women's rights in case women are victims of violence against women, refuge, women's aid, specialist services for women.

Specialist services around race, religion, disability, sexuality, older women and young girls.

Information around legal rights and responsibilities including agencies that provide legal advice such as Citizen Advice Bureaus

Immigration information – regarding renewal of their visas, the cost as well as providing information if their circumstances have changed (for instance if they have children or if the relationship has broken down)

Practical essentials:

How to register for national insurance number and what it is

Taxation and what is expected of migrant women

How to open a bank account, how to gather evidence necessary

Appendix II

Research consent Form

I..... have been invited by Eaves to participate in the research project Settling In.

I give my consent to take part in the research project.

Print name:	Signed:	Date:

NB. All data gathered will be anonymised and held in line with Eaves Data Protection and Confidentiality policy.

Appendix III

‘Settling In’ focus group: Part I – individual questions

Interviewer

Interviewee code

Location

Date

Section 1 - General

1. Age
2. Country of origin
3. Time of arrival into the UK (month and year) where do you currently live? (city or the first part of your postcode)
4. Is your partner a British national or a person with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)?
 Yes
 No (If no, please check if eligible to participate in the research)
5. Where did you get married?
 5.1. The UK
 5.2. Elsewhere _____
6. Did you live in the UK before you married your current partner?
 Yes (Go to Question no. 6.1)
 No (Go to Question no. 7)
 6.1. If yes, what was your status then?
 6.2. How long did you live in the UK on that category?
7. How long have you been married (or been in partnership) with your current partner?
8. Was your marriage/partnership arranged by someone else?
 Yes
 No

9. Do you have children?Yes (Go to Question no. 9.1)No (Go to Question no. 10)**9.1.** How many children do you have? **9.2.** How old are your children? (*Please state how many children you have in each category*)0 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - 18 **9.3.** Does your child or children live in the UK?Yes (Go to Question no. 9.3.2)No (Go to Question no. 9.3.1)**9.3.1** If your child or children do not live in the UK, can you tell us why? **9.3.2** Do your child/children speak English?Yes No Not applicable (*e.g. the child is pre-speech age*) _____**9.3.3** Are your children in education?Yes No Not applicable (*e.g. the child is pre-school age*) _____**10.** What was the reason for your migration to the UK?

Section 2 - Employment related questions

1. Have you ever been in employment/work before you came to the UK?

Yes _____

No

2. Have you ever been in employment/work in the UK? (This applies for both current and past employment/work)

Yes (Go to Question no. 2.1)

No (Go to Question no. 2.4)

2.1. If you are or were in employment/work, is/was it: *(tick all that applies)*

Full-time

Part-time

Temporary

Voluntary work

Self employed

Other

2.2. Are/were you satisfied with your employment?

Yes (Go to Question no. 3)

No (Go to Question no. 2.3)

2.3. If you are not or were not satisfied with your employment/work can you tell us why?

2.4. If you have never been in employment/work in the UK, can you tell us why?

3. Have you ever been given career/work advice

Yes (Go to Question no. 3.1)

No

3.1. Could you tell us who provided you with the advice **AND** how helpful it was?
(please note that there are 2 questions)

4. How would you describe the nationality/ethnicity of the majority of your work colleagues? *(Note, this question is for those who are/were in employment/work in the UK)*

British nationals

From your country of origin

Mix nationalities

I do not know

Other _____

5. Do/did you speak English at work?
(Note, this question is for those who are/were in employment/work in the UK)

I speak English all the time

I speak English sometimes but not always

No, I do not need to speak English

Other

Section 3 - Education related questions

1. Have you ever been enrolled in education before you came to the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 1.1)

No (Go to Question no. 2)

- 1.1. What is the highest level of qualification you had?

Primary education certificate

Secondary education certificate

Graduate level _____

Post graduate level _____

Vocational _____

Other

- 1.2. Were you able to use your qualifications in the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 1.4)

No (Go to Question no. 1.3)

1.3. If you were not able to use your qualification in the UK, can you tell us why?

1.4. Did you need to convert your qualification to use it in the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 1.5)

No

1.5. Did you get any assistance in converting your qualification?

Yes (Go to Question no. 1.6)

No

1.6. Could you tell us who provided you with the assistance **AND** how helpful it was?
(please note that there are 2 questions here)

2. Have you been in education or training in the UK? (*Other than English Language Course*)

Yes (Go to Question no. 2.1)

No (Go to Question no. 3)

2.1. What did you or are you studying?

2.2. Who paid for the study/training?

3. Have you ever been given any information around accessing education or training?

Yes (Go to Question no. 3.1)

No (Go to Question no. 4)

3.1. Who provided you with the information?

4. How would you describe your English language proficiency?

	No Proficiency	Elementary Proficiency	Working Proficiency	Advanced/Bilingual Proficiency
Speaking	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Reading	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Writing	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Other

5. Have you had English language course/s in the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 5.1)

No Go to Question no. 5.2)

5.1. Who delivered the course **AND** how did you pay? *(please note that there are 2 questions here)*

5.2. Could you tell us why you have never been enrolled in an English language course in the UK?

5.3. Do you think getting an English language course could help you or other migrant women 'settle' or 'integrate' better in the UK? Please explain *(In addition to a Yes/No response please nudge for explanation)*

Section 4 - Housing related questions

1. What is your housing situation?

Renting

Ownership

Shared (If shared please ask with how many people)

2. Do you like the neighbourhood/area you live in? Please explain

3. How would you describe the majority of your neighbours?

Section 5 - Accessing Services

1. Have you seen or registered with a medical professional since you came to the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 2)

No (Go to Question no. 3)

Other

2. If you have accessed medical services in the UK, please tell us about your experience?

3. Have you had any information about where/how to access medical services in the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 3.1)

No (Go to Question no. 4)

3.1. Where did you get the information about where/how to access medical services?

4. Do you have a bank account in your own name?

Yes, I have a joint account

Yes, I have an individual account

No, I don't have a bank account

Section 6 - Social life related questions

1. Do you participate in any social event in your area/community?

Yes

No

2. Do you have family members in the UK?

Yes

No

3. Would you say you have friends in the UK?

Yes (Go to Question no. 3.1)

No (Go to Question no. 5)

3.1. How do you describe your friends?

Where you meet them – work, school, community, etc. _____

Are they British or not _____

Are they from your country of origin or not _____

Mix nationalities _____

Other _____

4. What language do you usually speak with your friends?

5. How easy do you think it is to make friends in the UK?

Easy

Not easy

Please explain your response

6. How easy is it for you to travel around?

I usually travel around on my own

I manage to travel around with some help from family and friends

I need someone to accompany me when I want to go out of my house

Sometimes easy sometimes not easy

Not easy, for other reasons, please state

7. Do you feel you belong to:

The UK

Your country or origin

Both the UK and your country of origin

Extra notes

(Please state the corresponding number of the questions you are explaining here)

Appendix IV

‘Settling In’ focus group: Part II – group discussion

Interviewer/s

Location

Date

No. of Participants

1. Would you say your **expectation of life in the UK** has been met? (*aspirations, hopes, desires that you had*)
2. What did you find **surprising about life in the UK**?
3. How have you **adapted to the change** and life in the UK?
4. In your opinion what are the key **challenges or barriers** of ‘integration’ for migrant women in the UK?
5. In your opinion what are the most important **steps of ‘integration’** for migrant women?
6. How would you **define** ‘integration’?
7. Do you feel **happy in your life in the UK**? (*Yes & No – Hand raising*)
8. Do you think your **experience as a migrant woman would be any different if you were a man** who came to the UK as spouse of a partner of a British national or a person settled here?

Appendix V

Interview guideline questions for professionals

1. What **policies and initiatives** in your local area are available concerning 'integration' and do you think they are adequate to address the issues of 'integration'?
 - a) How do you **assess migrant women's needs?** (any system in place to for assess their particular need)
2. What recent **policy changes affecting migration** are you aware of and what impact do you think this will have on migrant women's 'integration', if any?
 - a) What measures are you putting in place to mitigate those effects or help migrant women overcome them?
3. From your experience working with migrant women on spousal or partner visa what do you think are the **key challenges or barriers** for their 'integration' into life in the UK?
 - a) What do you think is the effect of passing of time on those barriers?
4. What do you think should be **expected from migrant women** and the already **'settled' community/society** for better 'integration'?
5. How would you **define 'integration'** of migrants into life in the UK?
 - a) How did you arrive at your definition of 'integration'?
6. What would you (ideally) like to see when it comes to 'integration' of migrant women coming to the UK as spouse or partner of a British national or a person 'settled' here?

Appendix VI

‘Settling In’

One-to-one interview questionnaire

Interviewer

Interviewee code

Location

Date

1. A little bit about yourself:

- a) How old you are?
- b) Where you are from?
- c) How long you have been in the UK?
- d) Did you come as a spouse or partner or you married or got into partnership here in the UK?
- e) If you personally knew your husband/partner before or if it was an arranged relationship?
- f) Were in employment before you came to the UK? Are in employment now? . How easy/difficult is/was to get a job?
- g) Did you have formal educational qualification before or after you came to the UK? . Were able to use or convert those qualifications?
- h) What your English language proficiency was/is before and after you came to the UK?

2. Would you say the expectations you had of life in the UK has been met? (Also check what her expectation was?)

3. Is there anything you wish you had known or done before you came to the UK? (If you were doing this all over again or advising someone else who is about to come – what would you say to them (about culture, people, friendships, living, working)

-
4. **How would you describe your life in the UK? – Do you feel ‘settled’ and ‘integrated’? (work life, social life, etc.)**
 5. **Do you feel part of the neighbourhood or community you live in?**
 6. **What does ‘integration’ into life in the UK mean to you?**
 7. **What do you think are the key barriers for ‘integration’ for migrant women in the UK?**
 8. **Have you managed to make friends in the UK? (How easy do you think it is to make friends in the UK?)**
 9. **What do you think are some of the responsibilities of the ‘settled’ community in terms of helping migrant women ‘integrate’?**
 10. **What do you think are some of the responsibilities of migrant women in terms of integration?**
 11. **Ideally, what measures do you think would assist migrant women to better ‘integrate’ or feel ‘settled’ in their life in the UK?**
 12. **Any other comment**

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