

The background of the entire image is a dark, paved surface with a repeating diamond-shaped pattern. Four large, black, rectangular blocks are scattered across the surface. One block is in the upper left, another is in the middle left, a third is in the middle right, and the fourth is in the lower right. The blocks have a slightly textured appearance and cast soft shadows on the pavement.

FROM BENIGN NEGLECT TO CITIZEN KHAN

30 YEARS OF EQUALITIES
PRACTICE IN BIRMINGHAM

brap

#30YEARSOFEQUALITY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inevitably this report comments extensively on existing and previous equality practices. These comments aren't always positive but people working in this field in the city have been far more generous with their comments, observations, and reminiscences than we had a right to expect. In particular, the recommendations in section 2 benefited greatly from input by a select group of people from a range of faith, community, and public sector organisations who reviewed this report at a meeting held in March 2015. We'd like to acknowledge the honesty and generosity of all those who contributed.

We hope our admiration and respect for those who have fought for equality is obvious from this report. While we might not always agree with the methods used, there is no doubting the energy and conviction of those who tried to make Birmingham fairer and more equal. Whether they were the head of an equality unit, an activist chained to railings, or someone sitting at a desk desperately trying to write an equality strategy for a city of a million people, we would like to thank everyone involved in this story.

This report was made possible with funding from the Barrow Cadbury Trust, an independent, charitable foundation, committed to bringing about socially just change. For more information go to www.barrowcadbury.org.uk.



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SUMMARY

brap is an equalities charity with over 15 years' experience helping organisations deliver fairer services through training, research, and service redesign. We've noted with interest the wide-ranging debate recently about how to create fairer, more equal societies. While a lot of the discussion has been positive and insightful, participants have tended to ignore the nuts and bolts of equality practice. This report tries to fill that gap by:

- exploring how one city – Birmingham – has approached equalities issues over the last 30 years
- trying to sketch the impact of these approaches
- suggesting how we can do things differently in the future

• A RETROSPECTIVE OF EQUALITY PRACTICE

Many of the tools and interventions the city has used over the last twenty to thirty years have remained remarkably similar. They include:

- creating new policies and strategies (revising equality policies and action plans)
- community engagement and representation (improving representation of particular excluded groups in design of public services)
- monitoring progress (ensuring we are monitoring service performance)
- improving access to services (principal focus on better information sharing and outreach to raise awareness about services)
- training (mainly about improving understanding of equality legislation – in particular ability to complete particular technical aspects of equality practice, such as equality impact assessments)
- community development (support for local community groups to do their work to help vulnerable and excluded groups)

Of course, there have been some changes. There is now a much greater focus on multi-agency working to achieve fairer outcomes. There is also greater concern with leadership and organisational culture.

It is also worth noting that equality approaches tend to be reactive rather than proactive – that is, they respond to specific crises or individual pieces of legislation rather than being shaped as part of a coherent and shared vision of what society should look like.

● BIRMINGHAM'S PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING INEQUALITY IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

Whilst we have seen significant progress in obtaining fairer outcomes in some areas of life, significant inequalities still persist. For example:

- for every pound a man in Birmingham earns, a woman earns 81p
- for every White person in Birmingham unemployed (but actively seeking work) there are 2.9 people from a Black African background in the same position
- Black pupils are twice as likely to experience fixed-term exclusion compared to the city average

Even where inequalities have reduced, the rate of progress is not as fast as we would have hoped it would be.

● NEXT STEPS

GETTING ON THE SAME EQUALITY PAGE

We need crystal clear clarity about what we mean by 'equality' in this city. This actually sounds quite simple but you'd be surprised how many different answers you'll get to this question between and within organisations and communities across the city. When equality strategies are developed by public authorities this is often done in silos by separate agencies with their own particular areas of focus. Yet people's lives are rarely lived in this way. The effect of public sector spending cuts, changes to the welfare regime, re-design of public services, discrimination and inequality in the labour market, in mental health services, and in the education system are felt in a *cumulative* way by people. We all play a role in securing the equality of others in society in multiple and sometimes complex ways.

A ROAD MAP

But how do we get there? How do we identify and balance the needs and interests of such a diverse range of people living in this city? Birmingham has an opportunity to be the first city that judges its progress on equality based on a resident entitlement model. This will be based on the rights and entitlements that all people share and aspire to. It will be informed by what people think is important and by the *common* needs and concerns of people from different communities in the city. In other words, it will involve much more clarity about the 'domains' of equality that are important to a wide range of people in the city.

Once a universal list of entitlements like this for residents is drawn up across the city these could then form the basis of a clear and shared vision of what is important to residents and what a good quality of life would look like in the city. This would then be measured to see whether all people are enjoying this – and areas where more effort needs to be put in to achieve more equal outcomes for all residents can be identified.

TO BE HONEST

Once we've got our vision – what do we do about it? Firstly, we have to acknowledge our failures as well as our successes. A city affected by inequality is part of who we have been and who we

are. It would be disingenuous to think that excluded and deprived communities in the city don't feel left out of Birmingham's narratives of success in economic growth, its booming digital and creative industries scene and the attraction of top class restaurants and penthouse city-centre living.

Secondly, we then need to plan a programme of multi-agency, multi-sector activities to measure and improve progress in attaining the entitlements residents want. To develop this multi-agency response we need to draw upon the opportunities that localism affords us. For example, how do we work more collaboratively with faith-based organisations to agree a shared programme to respond to inequality in an area? How do we develop public sector investment strategies that complement our vision for equality?

STAYING AHEAD OF THE GAME

We need to take cohesion and segregation seriously. Unfortunately we have spent most of our time and energy responding to community cohesion challenges in times of crisis and in response to riots and community disgruntlement. It can feel at times that this is more about avoiding widespread social discontent and crisis management than thinking proactively about creating the type of city we want to live in. For brap this would be a city in which damaging stereotypes and discrimination are challenged and where residents can relate to the types of values by which we are expected to live together and are able to enjoy the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. Clearly there is more work to be done in defining what we mean by cohesion, whether this is the right way to describe it, and how we explain its benefits to the man or woman on the street.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a number of cities have established Fairness Commissions. Prompted in part by Wilkinson and Pickett's seminal work *The Spirit Level*, these Commissions have sought to address growing inequalities in society and ameliorate the damaging effects of public spending cuts and austerity. Typically they have brought together local stakeholders – public, private, and voluntary sector organisations; academics, politicians, and local residents – to try to ensure that decisions about public service redesign (and increasingly the *decommissioning* of services) are fair and equitable.

Over the past two years or so, Birmingham has had its own Fairness Commission in the form of *Giving Hope, Changing Lives*, a social inclusion process led by the Bishop of Birmingham.¹ This has been an important and timely dialogue, prompting a welcome and renewed focus on issues of inclusion and social justice in the city, reinforced by the new Labour administration's commitment to the Living Wage and the clear focus on equality and social justice in successive annual policy statements by the council leader, Sir Albert Bore.²

Reports from Fairness Commissions elsewhere in the country³ have typically analysed the differential inequality experienced by people from different backgrounds – usually in relation to race, gender and disability. This was much less the case in Birmingham's social inclusion White Paper⁴ and neither this nor a subsequent findings paper⁵ mentioned the role of discrimination, the social patterning of disadvantage, or the characteristics protected in equality law. Nor did any of the recommendations from Birmingham's social inclusion process relate to possible improvements in equality practice or the assessment of its impact.

brap felt this was an oversight and that a greater focus on the nuts and bolts of equality practice would not only be useful in promoting debate but would complement the work Birmingham's Commission had already done.

In developing a vision of 'fairness' Birmingham must also be clear about its vision of 'equality'. While it is tempting to assume that achieving the former necessarily delivers the latter, this isn't true. What is seen as 'fair' may not be 'equal'. A much clearer understanding of what effective equality practice should look like in different fields of life is needed. Therefore, in this report we set out to take the long view, interrogating how equality has been 'done' in the second city over the past thirty-odd years and concluding with some observations about how it might need to change in the future.

¹ See <https://fairbrum.wordpress.com>

² See Birmingham City Council (2014) *Leader's Policy Statement 2014* http://birminghamnewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Leaders_PolicyStatement_2014_FINAL.pdf

³ See for example, 'Sheffield Fairness Commission: Making Sheffield Fairer' (2012) and 'Creating the Conditions for Fairness: The Plymouth Fairness Commission Final Report' (2014)

⁴ See *Giving Hope, Changing Lives: Making Birmingham an Inclusive City – White Paper* (March 2013). http://fairbrum.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/white-paper-march-2013_final.pdf

⁵ In which a sub-group examined the question, 'how can we maximise the potential of our rapidly changing and diverse population?'

In 2007 the government initiated a major forty-year review of equalities in Britain, undertaken by an independent panel called the Equalities Review Team. The team's final report called for equality practices to be 'modernised', arguing that the most intractable inequalities could only be addressed by taking different action rather than more of the same. It also argued for new definitions or benchmarks of equality that would be relevant for a rapidly changing society.⁶

Of necessity, our project has been more modest in its aims. It looks only at Birmingham and covers only the preceding thirty years in any depth. Nonetheless, there are some similarities in the findings. We also found that many of the approaches to equality that have been used over the years have begun to prove resistant to change, and we try to explain their shortcomings, arguing for new and more progressive approaches. We argue that greater ambition is needed in the targets and objectives we set for equality interventions – because society is changing and 'success' is not the same as it was twenty or thirty years ago. And we examine data that illustrates progress against some key equality headlines, such as educational attainment, and consider whether the story is quite what it seems to be.

Finally, a word about the examples of equality practice and policy that this report considers. Most of them come from Birmingham City Council. This is *not* to single out the council for particular scrutiny but rather to accept that local authorities were, are, and will continue to be major players in virtually all issues relating to equality at a local level. Frankly, the city council has been a constant as many other public agencies have come and gone. It is a valuable source of information about approaches to equality over the last thirty years and one from which we can all learn.

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The first section examines the last few decades of equality practice in Birmingham, drawing out some key themes and the historical context for changes in practice. It ends by suggesting that there are some recurring themes and patterns in the way the city has approached equality practice.

The second section traces progress in addressing inequality in Birmingham over the last twenty years. Given the breadth of data that could have been reviewed, we focus on a few selective examples, using these to illustrate progress (or otherwise) and the nature and limitations of the equality interventions and practice used.

⁶ Equalities Review Team (2007) *Fairness and Freedom: Final Report of the Equalities Review*
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807034701/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/upload/assets/www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk/equality_review.pdf

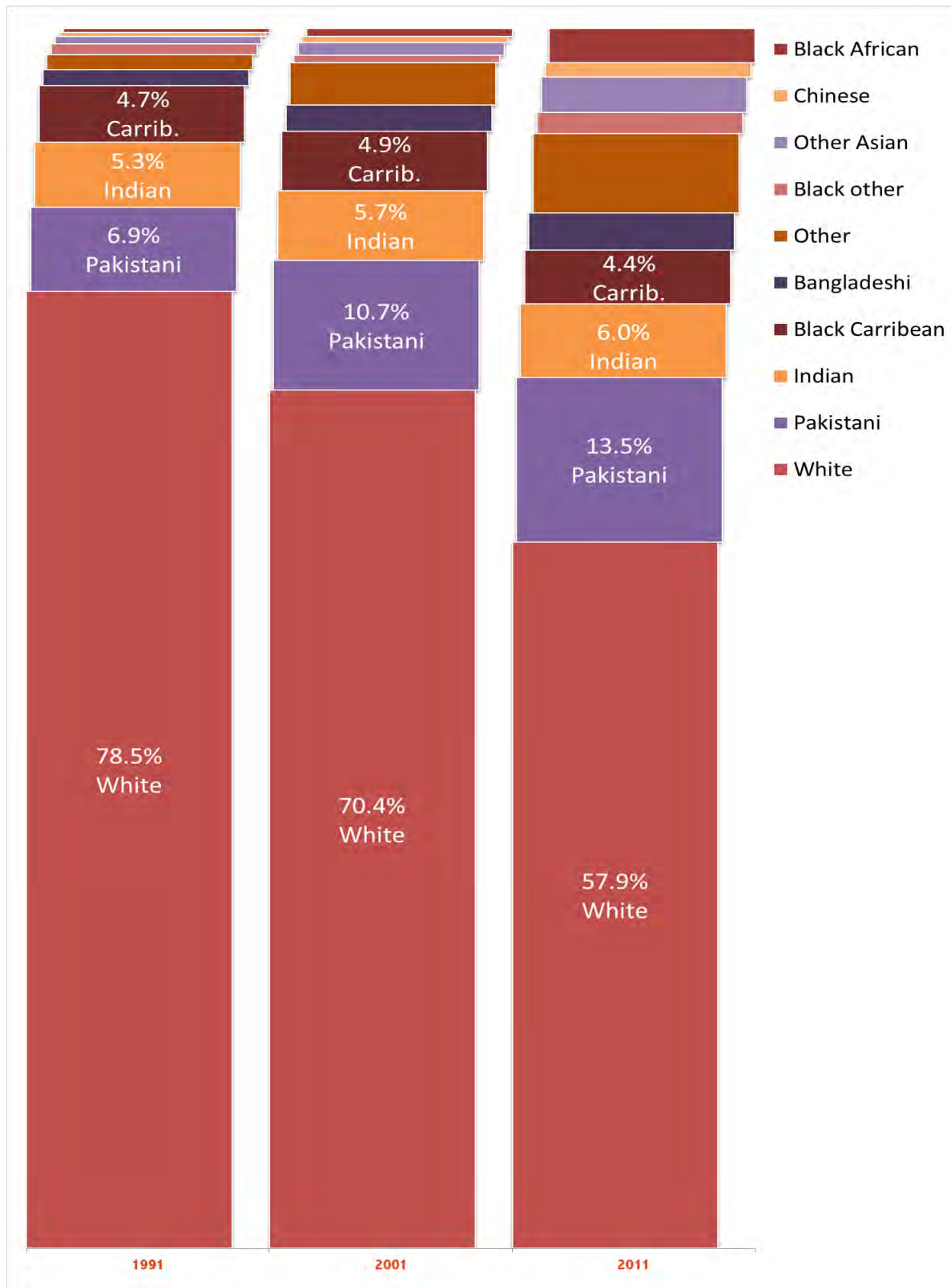
SECTION 1

EQUALITY PRACTICE IN BIRMINGHAM: A BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE

This section offers an overview of equality practice in Birmingham, spanning the period 1940 to 2014, with particular emphasis on the last thirty years. It draws out some key themes and the historical context for changes in practice. The section ends by suggesting that there are some recurring themes and patterns in the way the city has approached the delivery of equality practice.

Much of this section refers to changes in the ethnic make-up of the city. To provide some context, the table below describes changes since ethnicity was recorded in the census. See page 26 for notes.

Figure 1: changes in ethnicity in Birmingham, 1991-2011



1948-1979

'BENIGN NEGLECT'

In this section we'll be focusing on equality practice from the early-1980s to the present. In order to establish the context for this we do need to go back a little. Not too far, though, and not in too much detail: a brief outline of the immediate post-war period will give us just enough information to understand the approaches that came after it.

In 1948, the year the *Empire Windrush* docked at Tilbury, sporadic anti-immigrant protests were already taking place in Birmingham. In May of that year, 200 residents attacked the home of Indian immigrants, hurling stones and insults in equal measure. Indian workers were refused accommodation in most hotels (a situation the government didn't rectify until the introduction of the Race Relations Act in 1965) and public attitudes to minority communities were openly hostile: a 1956 survey of Brummies found over 80% wanted to restrict immigration and 98% said they would be unwilling to take in a 'coloured' lodger.⁷ One writer has characterised attitudes at this time as a mixture of 'benign neglect and anti-immigration rhetoric'.⁸ During the 1950s, for example, Birmingham City Council passed a motion asking the government to restrict immigration numbers, and even twenty years later, in the early 1970s, a survey of Birmingham councillors revealed that less than half could name an organisation working with minority groups.⁹

This period of indifference and opposition occurred at the same time as national policies began to make concessions to 'difference'. In 1977, for example, the Department of Education and Science acknowledged the need for a curriculum that could meet the needs of 'this new Britain'. It argued that the education system should evolve both in response to the changing nature of society and to the differing educational needs of minority ethnic pupils. However, despite pockets of support for Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups – funding for a Centre for Coloured People in Balsall Heath in 1951, for example – there was little attempt at systematic or strategic action. This is illustrated by the establishment of the Asian Resource Centre in Handsworth in 1976, which, we claim, is indicative of two important points:

- the centre was set up without statutory funding. Instead investment came from grant-making charities, most notably the Barrow Cadbury Trust
- the centre was set up to provide culturally sensitive services which were not provided by the council but which, it was argued, were needed to reduce stark inequalities¹⁰

References to other marginalised groups in the provision of council services are similarly few and far between. One exception is the council's provision of 'welfare services' to disabled people following the National Assistance Act 1948 (this placed a duty on every local authority to provide

⁷ See Romain Garbaye, *Getting into Local Power: the Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities* (2005).

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Newton, Kenneth (1976) *Second City Politics*

¹⁰ Bhattacharyya, Gargi (2003) *Across all Boundaries* and Williams, Charlotte and Johnson, Mark (2010) *Race and Ethnicity in a Welfare Society*

residential accommodation for people 'who, by reason of age, illness, disability or any other circumstances' were in need of care which otherwise wouldn't be provided). As a consequence of this change to the law, in 1950 Birmingham City Council concluded that it 'was no longer concerned with monetary assistance to persons who are without resources to meet their requirements'.¹¹

Many feel that the roots of much contemporary policy can be seen in these early formulations of equality in the 1950s and 60s. For example, Birmingham Disability Resource Centre (BDRC) argues that the council's 1950 decision to cease providing individuals with monetary assistance heralded a paternalistic attitude towards disabled people which even today makes national and local government averse to giving individuals the resources to make their own decisions about how to live an independent and autonomous life.¹² More positively, and also as a result of the National Assistance Act, local authorities could choose to deliver services in partnership with voluntary organisations where this would improve the service on offer – an idea now rarely out of the headlines.

Overall though, the attitude of public authorities to marginalised groups during this period is still best summed up as a combination of benign neglect and open hostility, and Birmingham proved no exception. Let's take a snapshot view in relation to the city's lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community:

- local public authorities didn't fund any lesbian or gay group during the 1970s and 1980s.¹³ The city's first gay community centre, opened in Bordesley Street in 1976, was funded entirely through donations and subscriptions. The city's stance was in marked contrast to West Midlands County Council which provided grants for, amongst other things, the West Midlands Lesbian and Gay Switchboard
- there are many cases of elected members and officers expressing openly homophobic views during this period. In just one case, in 1972, the Head of Personnel at Birmingham City Council allegedly told Birmingham Gay Liberation Front, 'we are sure we do not employ any homosexuals and we would not knowingly do so'.¹⁴

¹¹ See Millington, Peter (undated) *Disabled people and local authority services in 1950*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Knowles, Jeremy (2009) *An Investigation into the Relationship Between Gay Activism and the Establishment of a Gay Community in Birmingham, 1967-97*

¹⁴ Taken from Knowles (2009) *op cit*. Knowles cites his source as 'Graham Allen, interviewed 2007. Unfortunately the letter in question does not appear to have survived so this claim cannot be verified. A copy of the letter could not be found among the records of the Birmingham G[ay] L[iberation] F[ront] held at Birmingham Central Library or among the material in the G[ay] B[irmingham] R[emembered] project archive.' Many more examples can be found at the Gay Birmingham Remembered website, <http://gaybirminghamremembered.co.uk>, which is an excellent resource and well worth a browse.

1980s

BIG BROTHER AND BLEEDING HEARTS

The 1980s saw the establishment of three equality units within the city council: a women's unit in 1981, followed by race and disability units later in the decade. In this section we use the race unit as a case study to explore the drivers, constraints, and activities of these new departments.

The 1981 Census didn't ask about people's ethnicity, but it did ask about their country of birth. While this would include any Brummie from a BME background now over the age of 33, it's still worth noting that 86% of the city's population were UK-born. About 4% were Irish, 2.5% Pakistani, 2% Indian, and 2% Caribbean. (see figure 1, page 10 to see how this has changed over the last 30 years.)

It was against this backdrop in the 1980s that the city council formulated its first race equality policies. What, other than a 140,000-strong immigrant population, brought about this change? Perhaps unsurprisingly, it's difficult to pinpoint a single coherent reason. Different people provide different accounts. It's safe to say, though, that the following all played some part:

- inequality was becoming harder to ignore and some elected members – especially Labour councillors amongst the intake of the new 1984 administration – were voicing growing concern at the marked structural inequalities faced by BME communities¹⁵
- riots in Handsworth in 1981 and again in 1985 violently brought the issue of race and inequality to the fore. Although Lord Scarman dismissed the 1981 Handsworth riot as a 'copycat' of events in Brixton a few weeks before, a survey of young people at the time found more substantial causes – for example, 40% had been stopped and searched in the preceding 12 months under bitterly controversial SUS (stop and search) laws of the time¹⁶
- Birmingham – like all local authorities – was subject to national laws mandating action on race equality issues. The Local Government Act 1966 was particularly important for providing additional funding to local authorities who had to make 'special provision' for 'substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose language or customs differ from those of the community'.¹⁷ However, it was the Race Relations Act 1976 that really persuaded councils to take action on equalities issues. It placed a duty on them to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

¹⁵ Indeed, Romain Garbaye, in *Getting into Local Power: the Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities* (2005), argues that it was only really with the election of a Labour administration in 1984 that Birmingham City Council began to pursue its equalities duties with vigour, commitment, and purpose.

¹⁶ Quoted in Waddington, David (1992) *Contemporary issues in public disorder: a comparative and historical approach*.

¹⁷ Local Government Act 1966, Section 11.

In response to these issues, then, the council created a Race Relations Unit in 1984 and established the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee to oversee it (this was soon reformed as the Personnel and Equal Opportunities Committee, marking an association between equality and human resources which has continued to the present day). The aims of the Race Relations Unit were to:

1. address issues of institutional racism and discrimination, both within the council and the wider community
2. improve BME access to council services
3. advise on the development of corporate strategies and policies to assist in achieving the above¹⁸

To achieve these aims, the unit worked in four broad areas:

- research and policy development
- community development
- co-ordination of race discrimination complaints against the council
- collection and dissemination of information on race relations issues

By 1989, the unit had 31 staff in post, including race relations advisers in housing, social services, and education. A study of the Unit by Candappa and Joly (where all the preceding information comes from) notes that Birmingham was the only local authority where the head of the race unit was Assistant Chief Executive grade – although the position was only upgraded after the 1985 Handsworth riots forced the council to acknowledge that race relations needed a higher profile. It's also worth noting that during its life the unit had a number of different heads and was accountable to a number of departments and people. At one stage, for example, the unit was responsible to the Chief Executive of the council on policy issues but line managed by the Executive Director of Personnel and Management in relation to its day-to-day running. Some have suggested this dual approach allowed additional controls to be placed on the Unit's work or was indicative of the Executive's unwillingness to get involved in the implementation of race policies.¹⁹ Whatever the reason, this is a clear example of how equalities has always had a location problem: whose responsibility does it come under? Is it an issue of policy or practice? Should it be mainstreamed across departments or centralised under HR? This confusion, it appears, was something organisations faced right from the start.

We've talked about the establishment of the Race Relations Unit to highlight some trends in equalities practice down the ages – particularly how the unit was formed in a time of crisis and political pressure. It is also useful to take a step back and look at some of the specific work the unit did. We're focusing on 1989: the year of the Poll Tax, the Rushdie affair, and Black Box's *Ride on Time*.²⁰ Throughout that period, the Race Relations Unit was also responsible for:

¹⁸ These aims are quoted from an undated council document by Candappa, Mano and Joly, Danièle (1994) *Local Authorities, Ethnic Minorities, and 'Pluralist Integration'*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ Information is taken from the Race Relation Unit's annual report 1988/89, reproduced in Candappa and Joly (1994) *op cit*. Black Box's *Ride on Time*, the biggest selling single of 1989, can be heard here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lOb799cTxM

- **SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY:** Translation services formed a formidable part of the council's armoury. The unit translated policies relating to social services and housing, and produced 130,000 leaflets on the Poll Tax in eight different languages.
- **OUTREACH EVENTS:** The unit organised a ten-day multicultural festival to promote the heritage of the city's BME communities. In addition, a number of seminars and conferences were organised in conjunction with community groups to discuss and disseminate good practice in relation to race equality.
- **RACE EQUALITY POLICIES:** The unit, through the placement of race equality advisors in specific departments, helped devise equality policies in relation to education, housing, and social services.
- **MONITORING:** The unit established early forms of monitoring. For example, the housing department analysed annual lettings and racial harassment cases.
- **TRAINING:** Given how important this was to become, there is perhaps surprisingly little mention of training. However, the housing department reports providing training to staff on the needs of black and minority ethnic clients. In addition, the education department offered training to minority ethnic staff to ensure they were 'effectively trained' and ready for future career progression.
- **CRISIS MANAGEMENT:** The unit also played a role in managing tensions arising from events of significant public concern, such as the backlash against the *Satanic Verses*. In relation to this incident, the unit reported producing a leaflet explaining why the book was offensive to Muslims, conducting an assessment of the book's impact on race relations, and exploring safeguards against 'any future attacks on religious and ethnic minorities'.

Although we've focused on the Race Relations Unit to highlight key points relating to the council's equalities practice, it's important not to forget work being undertaken in relation to other marginalised groups. For example, the 1980s was a period of great activism in Birmingham's disabled community. With the formation of the Birmingham Disability Rights Group in 1985 there was a vehicle through which committed activists could lobby Parliament, appear on television debates, and – importantly – engage with the council around support for disabled people. One of the Group's key victories was the creation of Birmingham Disability Resource Centre. Although BDRC actually opened in 1992, it was during the 1980s that the council pledged its support and resources and funding were found.²¹

²¹ Millington, Pete and Wood, Hazel (2010) *Forward: the History of the Disability Resource Centre*

1990s

BIRMINGHAM UNITED?

During the 1990s the city's work on equalities issues continued unabated. For example, a common area of work not explicitly mentioned in the preceding section was the formalising of targets around particular areas of equality. For instance, in the latter part of the decade the council committed itself to having 20% of its workforce from a BME background and helping specific percentages of BME pupils obtain good educational outcomes.

It was also during this time that equalities training had a more 'psychological' character, with an emphasis on changing or challenging 'white' thinking and behaviour. From the mid-1980s onwards race awareness training (RAT) was a key tool in combatting racism in professional settings and workers in some sectors – especially education and other parts of the public sector – were required to participate in increasingly confrontational behaviour modification courses.

1997 saw a big change in the equalities landscape as the Equalities Division at Birmingham City Council was established. The women's, disability, and race equality units were merged into a single, integrated department overseen by a Cabinet member responsible for Equalities and Human Resources. The new division had a specific focus on social exclusion and sought to empower people from all backgrounds – regardless of ethnicity, gender, or disability – so they would be able to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making.

In this section, we'll look at engagement and representation as equalities tools. In particular, we want to tell the sad story of the Standing Consultative Forum.

During the 80s the council began making links with community groups on a systematic basis. This was motivated partly by the 1985 Handsworth riots (a council document from the time talks about how the 'disturbances reinforced the need for direct contact with the black communities') and partly by the insistence of individual councillors. In the mid-1980s the council created the Birmingham Advisory Liaison Committee to try and formalise the 'representative' relationships that had been cultivated with the Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Vietnamese, Hindu, Pakistani, and Sikh communities, and the Black-led Churches.²²

However, in a sign of what was to come, internal wrangling and rivalries, along with a boycott by 'Afro-Caribbean' organisations, caused the committee to collapse²³ and in 1988 it was replaced by what was then deemed to be an innovative structure: a series of self-organising umbrella groups representing different ethnic and faith-based communities. These were the Pakistani Forum, the Bangladeshi Islamic Project, the Sikh Gurdwara Council, the Hindu Temple Council,

²² This is taken from the Race Relation Unit's annual report 1998/89 reproduced in reproduced in Candappa and Joly (1994) *Local Authorities, Ethnic Minorities, and 'Pluralist Integration'*. The terms are taken directly from the report.

²³ See Modood, Tariq and Werbner, Pnina (1997) *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe*

the Afro-Caribbean Peoples Movement, the Council of Black-led Churches, the Vietnamese and Chinese Forum, the Irish Forum and two groups for Yemenis and Black women.

In 1990 the Standing Consultative Forum (SCF) was introduced, a single body through which these umbrella groups could engage with the council, and two years later this became a formally constituted organisation, with three representatives from each umbrella group.²⁴ The umbrella groups within the SCF were also allocated a council-funded community development worker and between them the groups represented over 500 community organisations.

And yet by 1999, the SCF had been disbanded. What went wrong? Well, there are numerous theories, but here's our take. Firstly, the SCF model was costly and the council struggled to resource it effectively – especially when other ethnic and/or faith groups not originally part of the SCF structure began to lobby for *their* umbrella group and resourcing. Secondly, umbrella group members lacked capacity and there was a heavy reliance on the paid community development workers (rather than umbrella groups and their members). Thirdly – and most importantly – there was growing doubt regarding the ability of specific community organisations or individuals ('community leaders') to represent entire communities on the basis of faith or ethnicity. The council's own review of the SCF put it this way: *The perceived notion of homogeneity of minority ethnic communities has informed a great deal of race equality work to date. The effect of this...has been to place an over reliance on individuals who are seen to be able to represent the needs or views of a whole community and resulted in simplistic approaches toward tackling community needs.*²⁵

So, the SCF was ultimately unsuccessful because it failed to recognise the diversity within communities and the fact that one or two (or even three) individuals can't speak for whole swathes of people. While many readers will regard this as a truism, engagement remains a thorny issue and the allure of 'community leaders' and representatives has never entirely gone away. As recently as 2013, for instance, a scrutiny review of the city's approach to cohesion reflected the continuing tension which exists between ensuring that consultation mechanisms are 'representative' while also recognising that community leaders do not necessarily speak for all sections of the community.²⁶

Incidentally, after the SCF was disbanded in 1999 it was replaced by another innovative structure: a new race equality partnership between a range of organisations, including the Learning and Skills Council, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham TUC, and Connexions. Birmingham Race Action Partnership, as it was known, eventually changed its name to brap and wrote the report you're reading now.

²⁴ Maloney, William et al (2001) 'Social Capital and the City' in Foley, Michael et al (2001) *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective*

²⁵ Quoted in brap (2004) *Do They Mean Us?* The analysis of why the SCF failed is taken from this paper too

²⁶ BCC Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2013) *Birmingham: Where the World Meets*

2000s

BROADER SHOULDERS: IDENTITY AND COHESION

This decade started with a major inquiry undertaken by the Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Commission²⁷. The report, which was published in 2001, identified some important areas for investment and improvement in race equality. It also outlined a number of misgivings about the structural and institutional nature of racism in parts of the city. The report called on the council and other agencies (such as the police) to respond to inequalities in areas like recruitment and employer relations, education, and criminal justice.

By the start of this decade, over 40% of the city's school intake was from a BME background.²⁸ Despite progress on reducing inequalities in attainment for some groups, significant differences remained. In particular, African Caribbean boys and girls, Bangladeshi boys, White boys, and Pakistani boys were all experiencing an attainment gap when compared to the average in the city.

By 2002, the city's Education Service was liaising closely with the Department for Education and Skills to set agreed targets relating to the underachievement of BME groups: for example, in 2002, 37% of Black pupils were expected to achieve five or more A-C grades at GCSE.²⁹ However, these targets were not always met. Indeed, a scrutiny committee report at the time noted the slow rate of progress tackling inequalities affecting African/Caribbean heritage pupils and white disadvantaged boys.³⁰

In response, the Education and Arts Overview and Scrutiny Committee suggested a range of interventions:

- schools should make explicit their high expectations for all pupils
- the city's Education Service should produce guidance for schools covering the range of religious and community groups in Birmingham (at the time guidelines existed only in relation to Sikhs and Muslims)
- schools should have a policy for cultural, religious and ethnic diversity
- staff and governors should receive cultural diversity training
- efforts should be made to recruit governors from diverse cultural backgrounds
- a calendar of festivals should be integrated into school processes³¹

²⁷ Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Commission (2001) *Birmingham Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report*

²⁸ Abbas, Tahir (2006) *Muslims in Britain, UK: Background Paper for COMPAS*, University of Oxford

²⁹ Birmingham City Council Education and Arts Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2002) *Cultural Diversity in Schools*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*. See the report for the full list of recommendations.

Two things are striking here. The first is how similar many of these interventions are to those undertaken by the Race Equality Unit in the 1980s (see page 15). There are differences of detail, but the broad picture – training, equality policies, representative recruitment practice – remains generally the same.

The second issue is the focus on and use of identity-based interventions: the assumption that individual communities have some special and particular needs that have to be met. This is all the more surprising given the Committee's report explicitly talks about the importance of not 'problematizing' particular groups, of reducing socioeconomic inequalities, and of focusing on learning needs rather than cultural needs (the best educational outcomes, it is argued, are essentially achieved by running a good school, having an ethos that emphasises achievement, demonstrating good management, raising pupil self-esteem, and so on).

Of course, the Scrutiny Committee was not alone in taking this approach. As mentioned, the Education Department had liaised with local Muslim and Sikh groups to produce guidelines on meeting pupils' religious and cultural needs. The document produced by the city's Muslim Liaison Committee is useful in showing in what ways it was thought Muslim pupils needed to be treated differently:

- relationships: schools were asked to bear in mind that 'Asian' parents might have strong reservations about inter-sex relationships
- prayer facilities: schools should be 'sympathetic' to the provision of a prayer room
- religious festivals: schools should be mindful of religious holidays
- school meals: whatever their requirements, pupils should be excused from eating inappropriate foods. Suppliers should be asked to adhere to the city's guidelines on the preparation of halal food
- sex education: sex education should be taught with 'sensitivity' to ensure parents' religious and social beliefs are not offended
- swimming: the principle of modesty should guide the type of provision that is made for swimming
- music/dance/drama: certain types of music and participation in dance activities might be offensive to some parents. Drama teaching should be 'informed' by the 'principle of modesty'³²

The noughties was also a decade of significant social turmoil. The 2001 riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, the 9/11 attacks in New York and their aftermath, and especially the July 2005 London tube bombings all prompted a significant re-evaluation of race relations practice. In Birmingham the Lozells riots in 2005 also raised serious concerns about inequalities between communities and levels of segregation across the city. Trevor Phillips warned that Britain was 'sleepwalking into segregation' with many communities 'marooned outside the mainstream'.

³² City of Birmingham Education Department/Muslim Liaison Committee (1999) *Revised Guidelines on Meeting Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim Pupils*

These events helped to put community cohesion and the search for a sense of shared national identity centre-stage in public policy. Nationally, the high-profile Community Cohesion Independent Review Team, led by Professor Ted Cantele, was established.³³ In Birmingham, significant emphasis was placed on developing a community cohesion strategy and named public sector officers and councillors suddenly had 'cohesion' as part of their job title. The segregation and alienation of particular communities and anxiety about Islamist radicalisation also contributed to an increasingly influential role for faith-based organisations in policy-making. In Birmingham (and elsewhere), this was reflected in an increasing emphasis on inter-faith activities and faith-based community cohesion work,³⁴ widely viewed as a natural corollary to the government's Prevent strategy which targeted specific (largely Muslim) communities.

In this same period there were a number of important changes in the way equality legislation was designed. Increased emphasis was placed on public sector duties that encouraged public authorities to be more proactive in their efforts to reduce discrimination in their organisation. Thus, for example, this decade saw a rise in the use of equality impact assessments and an increased focus on recording and publishing equality monitoring information. As an illustration of the types of activities organisations took to meet their statutory equality duties, Appendix 1 summarises the specific actions outlined by Birmingham City Council in its disability, gender, and race equality schemes for the period 2007-10.

As can be seen, the council was prioritising different actions across different fields of equality. For example, the disability scheme describes service-specific interventions required for disabled service users relating to physical access. At the same time, in relation to gender, it was proposing largely strategy/policy-based actions to address domestic violence and improve the representation of women engaging in consultation on regeneration programmes. The equivalent race strategy set out a range of actions relating to things like housing and hate crime, prioritising, for example, training and the need to monitor service uptake. Nonetheless, an analysis of the range of actions across the three fields of equality – disability, gender, and race – reveals some broad patterns in the types of interventions recommended (which, perhaps unsurprisingly, relate closely to specific duties outlined in equalities legislation):

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: by and large the most common type of action described in the schemes relate to further policy-based activity (such as writing a new strategy, developing a new target, or conducting a review of progress)

ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION: there are a number of actions to improve the representation of particular excluded groups in the design of public services

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES: focusing particularly on improving information sharing with traditionally excluded service users, improving advertisement, and outreach

³³ See Community Cohesion Review Team (2001) *Community Cohesion: a report of the independent review* and Community Cohesion Panel (2004) *The End of Parallel Lives?*

³⁴ This was same decade in which the play *Behzti* was cancelled following Sikh activists who disagreed with its portrayal of a controversial scene of rape and physical abuse in a Gurdwara.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT, MONITORING, AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

recommending increased use of equality impact assessments, more efficient equality monitoring, and research/consultation to identify specific needs of excluded groups

TRAINING: focusing primarily on better understanding of equality legislation – in particular an ability to conduct equality impact assessments was mentioned several times

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: support for local community groups to do their work to help vulnerable and excluded groups

2010s

BEGINNING AGAIN?

So far, this has been a whirlwind tour of equalities practice in the second city. In this section we're going to wrap up by taking a quick look at how new innovations are meant to make equalities practice more streamlined and strategic.

The Equality Act (2010) was passed at the start of this decade. It introduced nine 'protected characteristics' – age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation – as aspects of people's identities which are protected in law. Subsequent revisions to the Act also did away with many specific duties public bodies had to perform in relation to equality – devising an equality scheme, consulting on new policies, and monitoring the impact of policies for example. In their place, the Act requires public bodies to devise one or more equality objectives and publish information every year showing how it is eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations.

At the time of writing, the city council has chosen to publish equality objectives under each of its main service directorates (Economy, Place, and People). In addition, each directorate has identified specific actions to meet these objectives. Whilst there are too many of these – outlined in various reports and plans – to be usefully listed here, it is worth noting two new trends in approach and practice. First, high-level equality objectives for each directorate relate closely to their overall strategic aims. This move towards 'mainstreaming' equality into core business is a noticeable shift and encouraged by the Equality Act 2010. Second, many of these plans identify the need to work more closely with other departments and agencies, reflecting the current emphasis on multi-agency working. As with previous decades, though, the specific tools and forms of equality practice different directorates are using to devise and achieve their aims broadly fall into three main types:

- equality analyses/assessments
- service user consultation
- monitoring take-up of services by protected characteristic

However, exploring publicly available information (such as equality action plans for different directorates), it appears there is still a relative lack of detail about how services will be re-designed and practice changed once equality analysis, consultation, and monitoring have taken place.

In addition to directorate-specific priorities, the council has also identified some organisation-wide strategic objectives, such as the Council Business Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Issues of fairness and inequality have been mainstreamed into normal business and delivery planning here too (and, again, there is increased emphasis on joint delivery with other agencies).

Other organisation-wide goals are contained in various standards and quality marks the council has chosen to subscribe to, including Positive about Disabled People, the Equality Framework for Local Government, and the Stonewall Equality Index. Each of these standards has its own set of criteria. The Stonewall Equality Index, for example, assesses organisations against eight areas of best practice, including employee engagement, monitoring, supplier policy, and LGB community engagement. Perhaps the most wide-ranging and demanding standard, however, is the Equality Framework for Local Government, which assesses councils' performance across five key areas:

- knowing local communities and equality mapping
- place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- community engagement and satisfaction
- responsive services and customer care
- a modern and diverse workforce

It's worth comparing this list with the areas of work undertaken by the Race Equality Unit back in the 1980s (page 15). There is a great deal of overlap. This is not to say that practice hasn't changed at all, of course (to take just one example, the requirement for local community involvement in decision-making has greatly increased over the past two decades). However, it's clear the most original innovation the framework introduces is the emphasis on leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment – or, in plainer language, whether leaders walk the walk and staff know that, when push comes to shove, equality matters

SO WHAT DOES THIS BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE TELL US?

Firstly, it's clear we have come a long way since the period of 'benign neglect and anti-immigration rhetoric' of the post-war decades described by Garbaye.³⁵ Yet some trends persist. In Birmingham there is a tendency to develop equality and fairness initiatives in response to crisis (riots, the death of service users, poor reports from regulators) rather than proactively.

Similarly, although recent years have seen an increased emphasis on joint-agency strategies (the Social Inclusion Programme has been a great example of this), we still lack a shared vision for what effective inter-agency 'equality practice' in Birmingham should look like. There are not, as yet, common, practical standards of conduct or a clear statement of public service values and behaviours that describe how equality and human rights are to be protected for all residents.

We have also seen that many of the tools and interventions we are using to respond to inequality have remained relatively unchanged for the last twenty years. They include:

- creating new policies and strategies (revising equality policies and action plans)
- community engagement and representation (improving representation of particular excluded groups in design of public services)
- monitoring progress (ensuring we are monitoring service performance)
- improving access to services (principal focus on better information sharing and outreach to raise awareness about services)
- training (mainly about improving understanding of equality legislation – in particular ability to complete particular technical aspects of equality practice, such as equality impact assessments)
- community development (support for local community groups to do their work to help vulnerable and excluded groups)

If these tools and processes can deliver what we want them to then we should obviously continue to use them. But, as we shall see in Section 2, Birmingham continues to experience persistent inequalities in key fields of public life (education, housing, and employment to name but three) and these have proven remarkably intractable to change. With the new flexibilities afforded by the Equality Act (such as less prescriptive specific duties) now is a good time to reflect more critically on the tools and strategies we are using to promote equality in the city. Is our equality monitoring practice achieving what we want it to? Are information-sharing initiatives and translation services the best way to improve access to public services? Is training on equality legislation the best way to improve equality in public services?

³⁵ Garbaye, Romain (2005) *Getting into Local Power*

SECTION 2

FACTS AND FIGURES: BIRMINGHAM'S PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING INEQUALITY IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

This section traces progress in addressing inequality in Birmingham over the last twenty years. Given the breadth of data that could have been reviewed, we focus on a few selective examples, using these to illustrate progress (or otherwise) and the nature and limitations of the equality interventions and practice used.

INTRODUCTION

The previous section described how equality policy and practice in Birmingham have both evolved and remained enduringly similar over the past twenty years. But what of the outcomes experienced by Birmingham's minority communities and excluded groups? To what extent has there been progress in addressing the inequalities experienced by people from different backgrounds in the city? This section offers a range of headline figures in different areas of life in Birmingham, focusing on housing, employment, income, and education.

Given the timescale involved (at least the past twenty years), the range of data and topics that might be covered is vast. The task is made all the harder by inconsistencies in the way data has been recorded over that time, as well as a general lack of dependable equality data prior to around 2000, particularly for protected characteristics that have only enjoyed legislative protection in the last decade or so (for example, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender reassignment).

What follows then is a selective and incomplete account of progress on equality in Birmingham over the past twenty years or so. We have focused specifically on fields of equality where data has been collected and shared by public authorities or is available from census sources and have avoided including data that has already been published as part of the Birmingham's Social Inclusion process.

The aim in doing this is to show the broad direction of travel, to give some sense of the inequality challenges the city still faces, and to formulate some meaningful questions about what future approaches to equality should like in Birmingham.

A NOTE ON DATA AND LANGUAGE

The following graphs only provide an indicative picture of equality in Birmingham. Due to changes in the way particular indicators have been measured across time, it is not possible to draw precise comparisons between any two given years.

In addition, the categories used to record ethnicity have changed over time. For example, the 1991 Census did not include a 'Mixed/multiple ethnic' category. In most cases, then, 1991 Census data will record outcomes for this group under the 'Other' ethnic category. Later decades will have a 'Mixed/multiple ethnic' category (with the exception of figure 1 on page 10, which standardises categories across all three decades). In some cases, to engineer some sort of consistency, we've used 'broad' ethnic categories (which means recording data for 'Asian' people rather than 'Indians', 'Pakistanis', and 'Bangladeshis'). This has the disadvantage of hiding inequalities within groups – the 'White' category, for example, contains an increasing number of Eastern European people as the years progress. Hopefully, though, this is a reasonable compromise which allows a picture of equality trends to develop over time.

Finally, with regard to categories, we know that some of the terms used are not best practice. We acknowledge the problems with lumping disparate communities together as 'Asian', 'Black', and 'Other'. We also recognise that referring to people from multiple heritage backgrounds as 'Mixed' or 'Mixed race' can be offensive. However, for the sake of consistency, we have gone for the category names used on the forms and surveys from which the data is derived.

HOUSING

Birmingham has the single largest concentration of overcrowded housing, *The Guardian* announced in late 2012. The article was based on data from the 2011 Census showing there are 37,000 households in the city too small for the number of people living in them.

Figure 2 uses slightly different measures of overcrowding to paint a picture of how different ethnic groups have been affected by overcrowding over time.

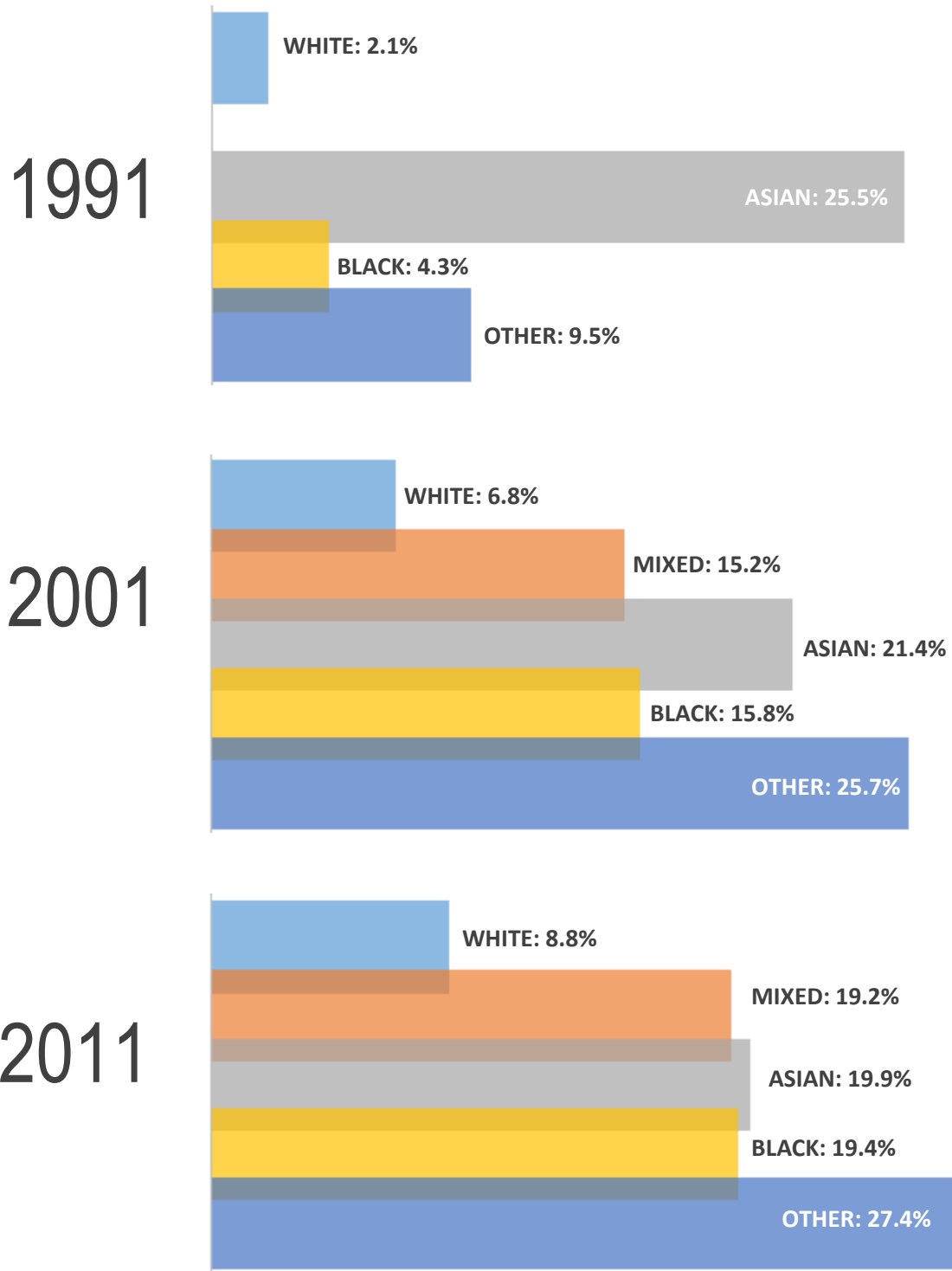
Overcrowding is not distributed evenly amongst communities. In 1991, of 12,800 households headed by a Pakistani, 37% (3,000) were overcrowded. (In a similar vein, 42% of 2,270 Bangladeshi households were overcrowded.)

There have been some clear changes since then. The 2011 Census shows that, of 74,000 'Asian' households, 14,000 have at least one room too few for the number of people living in them and that in addition 27% of households from the 'Other' ethnic group also face overcrowding. The proportion of 'Black' households too small for the number of people living in them has risen from 4% in 1991 to 19% in 2011.

Not only does this illustrate an inability to reduce inequality and improve living conditions for everyone; it also confirms that in some respects inequalities are increasing.³⁶

³⁶ The news on housing isn't all bad, however. Today, no more than 5% of households in any ethnic group lack central heating, whereas in 1991 62% of Pakistani households, 56% of Bangladeshi, 32% of Black Caribbean, and 37% of White households all lacked central heating. It's worth noting, though, there are still 16,820 households in Birmingham without central heating.

Figure 2: % of overcrowded households, by ethnicity



EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER

Figure 3 over the page gives a snapshot of where Brummies 'were' in the labour market at particular points in time over the last 25 years.

The first thing to note is that women have always been less likely to be active in the labour market (that is, they're less likely to be in work or looking for work). Women are ten times more likely than men to put work on hold to look after family (10% of women are in this category compared with just 1% of men). It is important that the other employment figures are considered in this context.

In 1991, women were seven times more likely to be in part-time work than men. By 2011, women were 'just' twice as likely to be in this position. However, it's clear that the proportion of women in part-time work actually rose during this period. The reason this inequality appears to have reduced is that more men also found themselves in part-time or self-employed work.

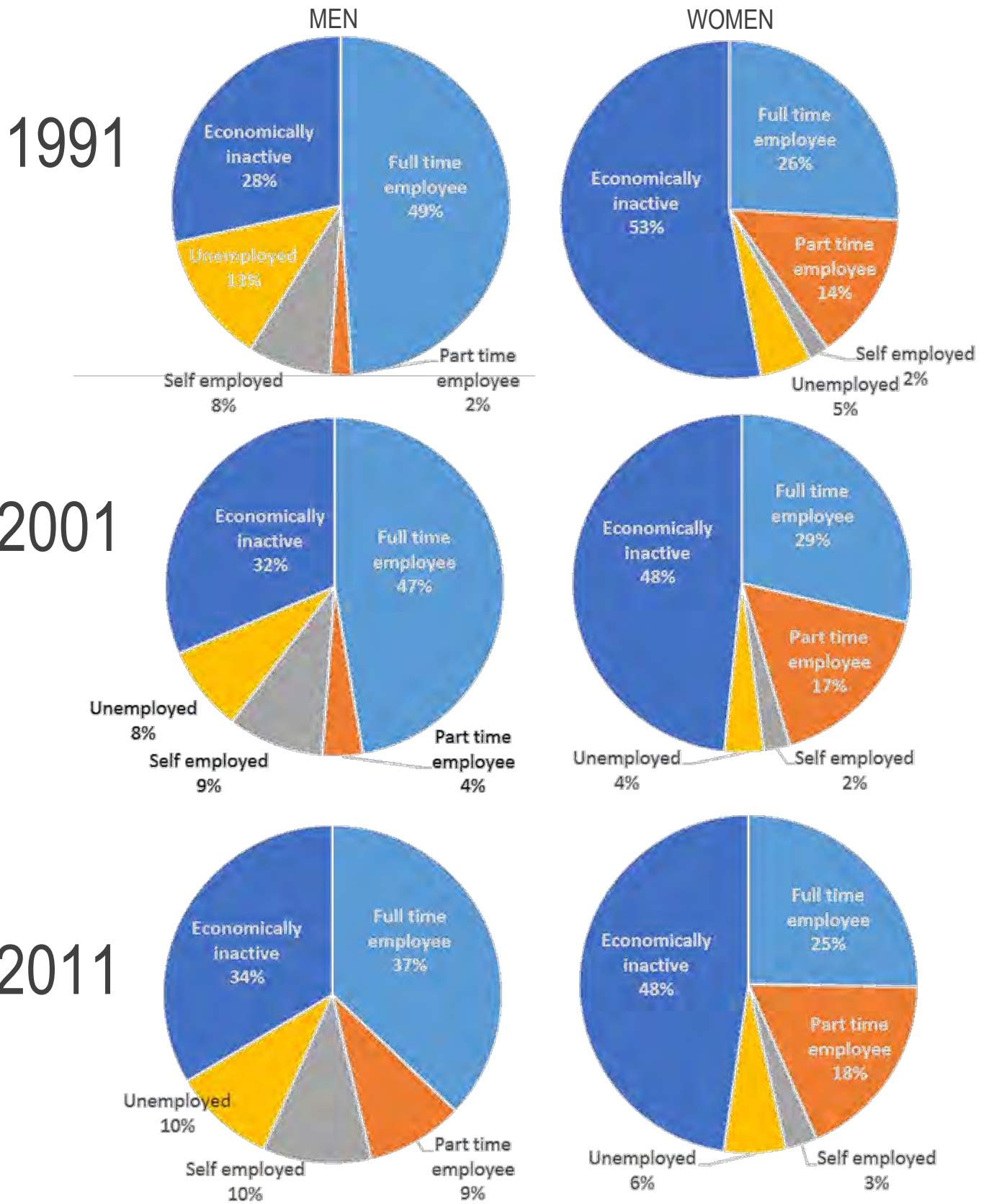
Of course, gender employment discrimination is not just about access to the labour market. Even 45 years since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act, earnings inequalities are still stark. Take, for example, gross hourly pay for both full- and part-time work.

In Birmingham, for every £1 a man was paid a woman was paid...

- 71p in 1997
- 72p in 2000
- 79p in 2005
- 80p in 2009

In 2013, women took home 81p for every pound a man took home. A welcome improvement on the 1997 situation, but at this rate of progress it will be 2038 before pay equality is achieved – and this is assuming there will always be progress: between 2012 and 2013 the gender pay gap actually increased.

Figure 3: economic activity by gender



EMPLOYMENT AND ETHNICITY

Figure 4 shows the ratio of ethnic Jobseekers Allowance claimants for every White claimant in Birmingham (for the sake of simplicity we've only included 25-49 years olds). This is an imperfect measure of unemployment for a number reasons, not least because it doesn't take account of the many people who don't claim JSA while out of work. Additionally, it is important to note that 'White' in this instance includes those from Irish and East European communities.

These caveats in mind, it appears that over the past ten years, on average, for every White JSA claimant there has been:

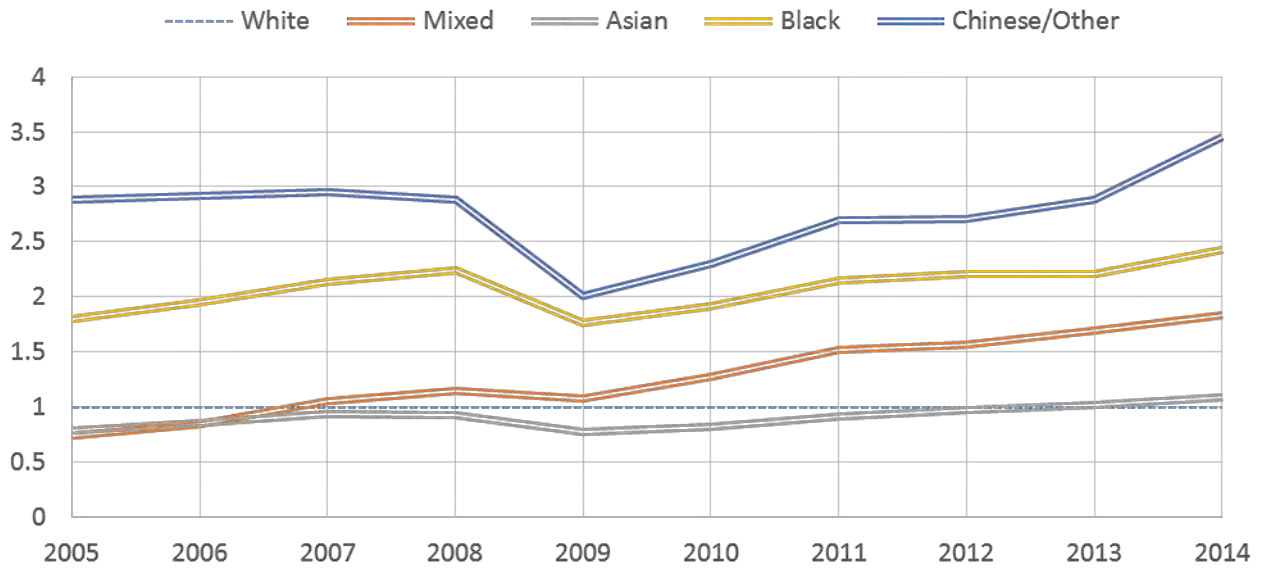
- 1.3 claimants from a 'Mixed' background
- 0.9 claimants from an 'Asian' background
- 2.1 claimants from a 'Black' background
- 2.8 claimants from a 'Chinese/Other' background

What are we to make of this? Necessarily, the broad ethnic categories by which claimants are recorded makes analysis difficult. However, it is clear that over the past ten years – including both recession and recovery – the disproportionality affecting 'Black' and 'Chinese/Other' claimants did not at any time come close to being resolved.

Figure 5 shows a much more robust measure of unemployment over the past twenty or so years. Not only does the data encompass a wider age range (people aged 16 and over), but the definition of unemployment it uses is broader. It appears that many stark inequalities have narrowed – those affecting Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities stand out. However, it is equally clear that ethnic minorities in Birmingham are still hugely disadvantaged. For every White person in Birmingham unemployed (but actively seeking work) there are:

- 2.0 people from a Pakistani background
- 2.3 people from a Bangladeshi background
- 2.9 people from a Black African background
- 2.4 people from a Black Other background

Figure 4: ratio of ethnic minority JSA claimants to White claimants



Unemployment rate (%)

Figure 5: Birmingham unemployment rate by ethnicity

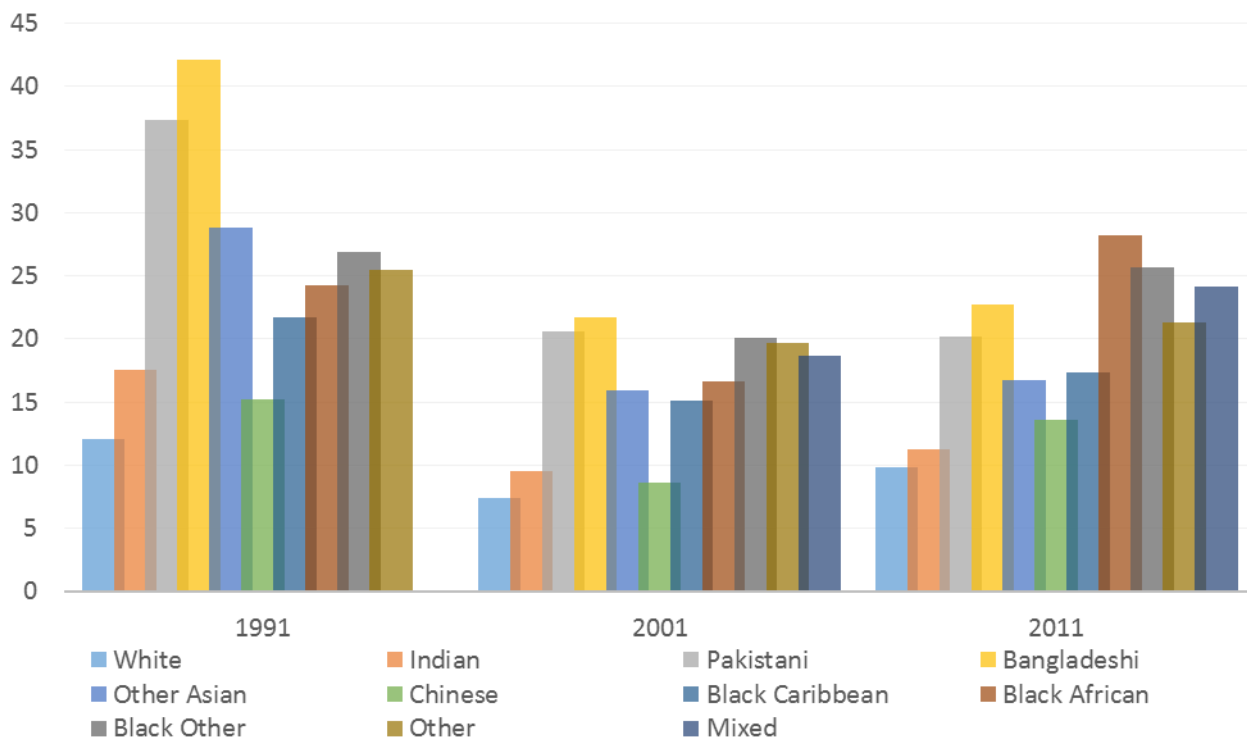


Figure 6: Unemployment by ethnicity in UK and Birmingham

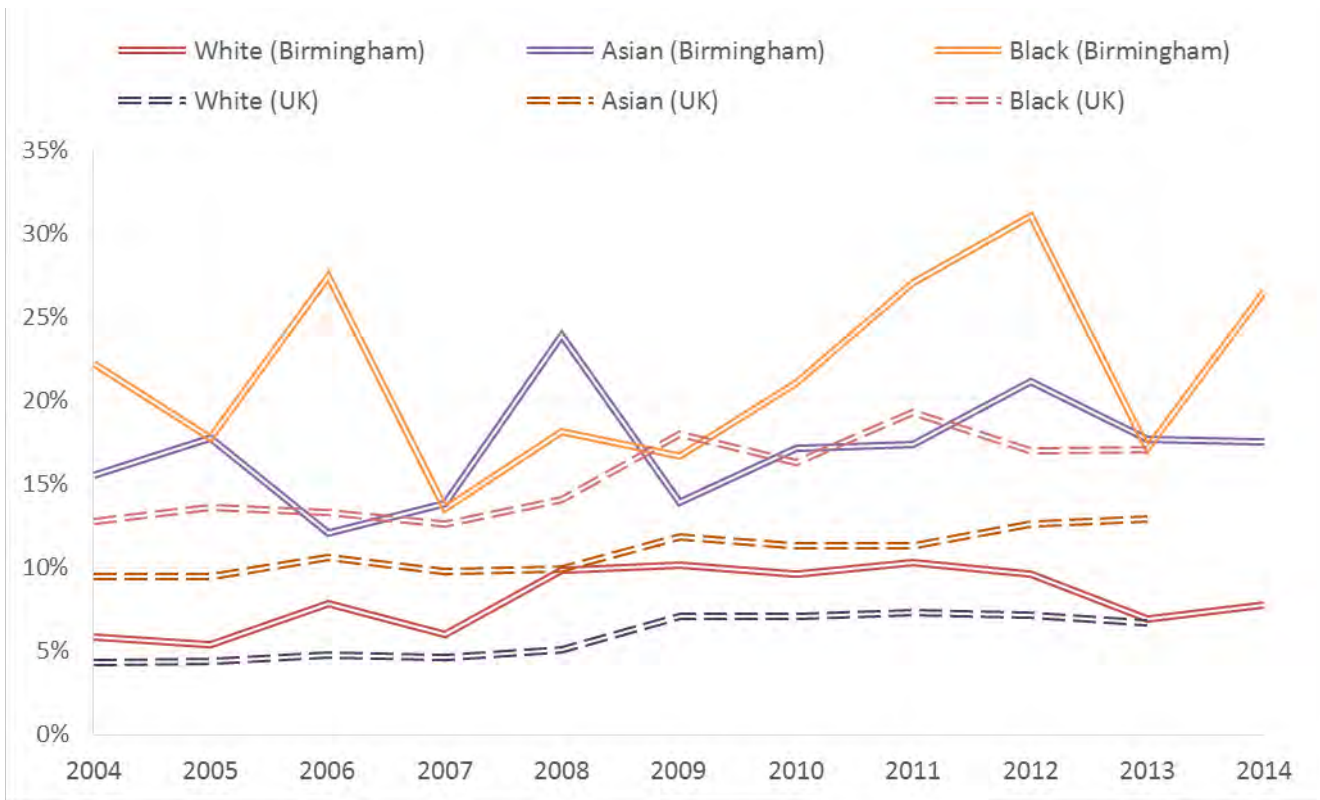


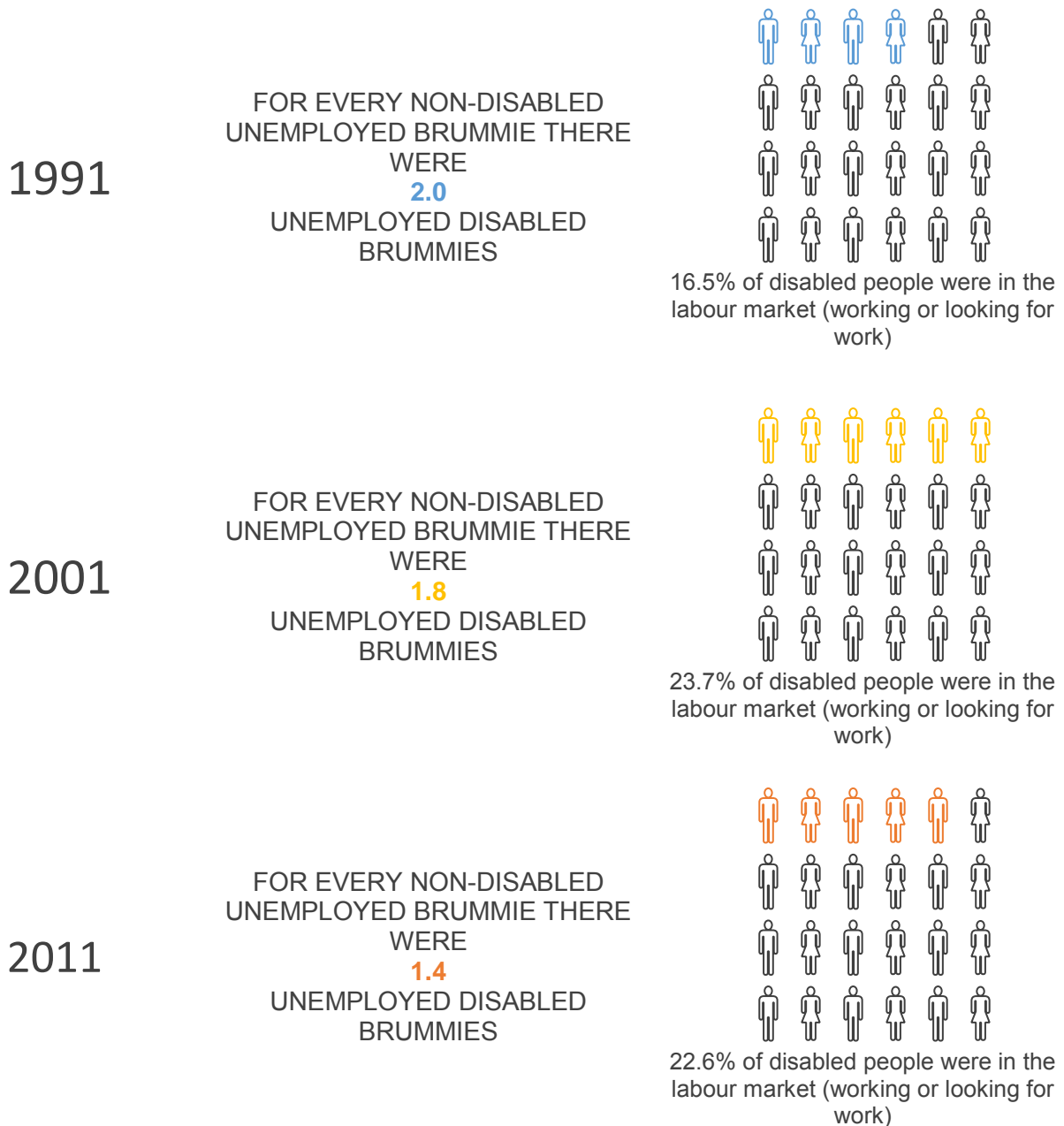
Figure 6 shows in a bit more detail the actual unemployment rate in Birmingham over the last ten years. Data relating to 'Mixed' and 'Other' ethnic groups have been removed as they rely on too small a sample size. In addition, we've shown how Birmingham unemployment rates compare to national ones.

As can be seen, Black people in Birmingham are doubly disadvantaged: not only do they fare less well compared to other ethnic groups, but they also fare less well compared to the national Black unemployment rate. Whilst the unemployment rate for white people in Birmingham is stabilising, for others it is creeping up.

EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY

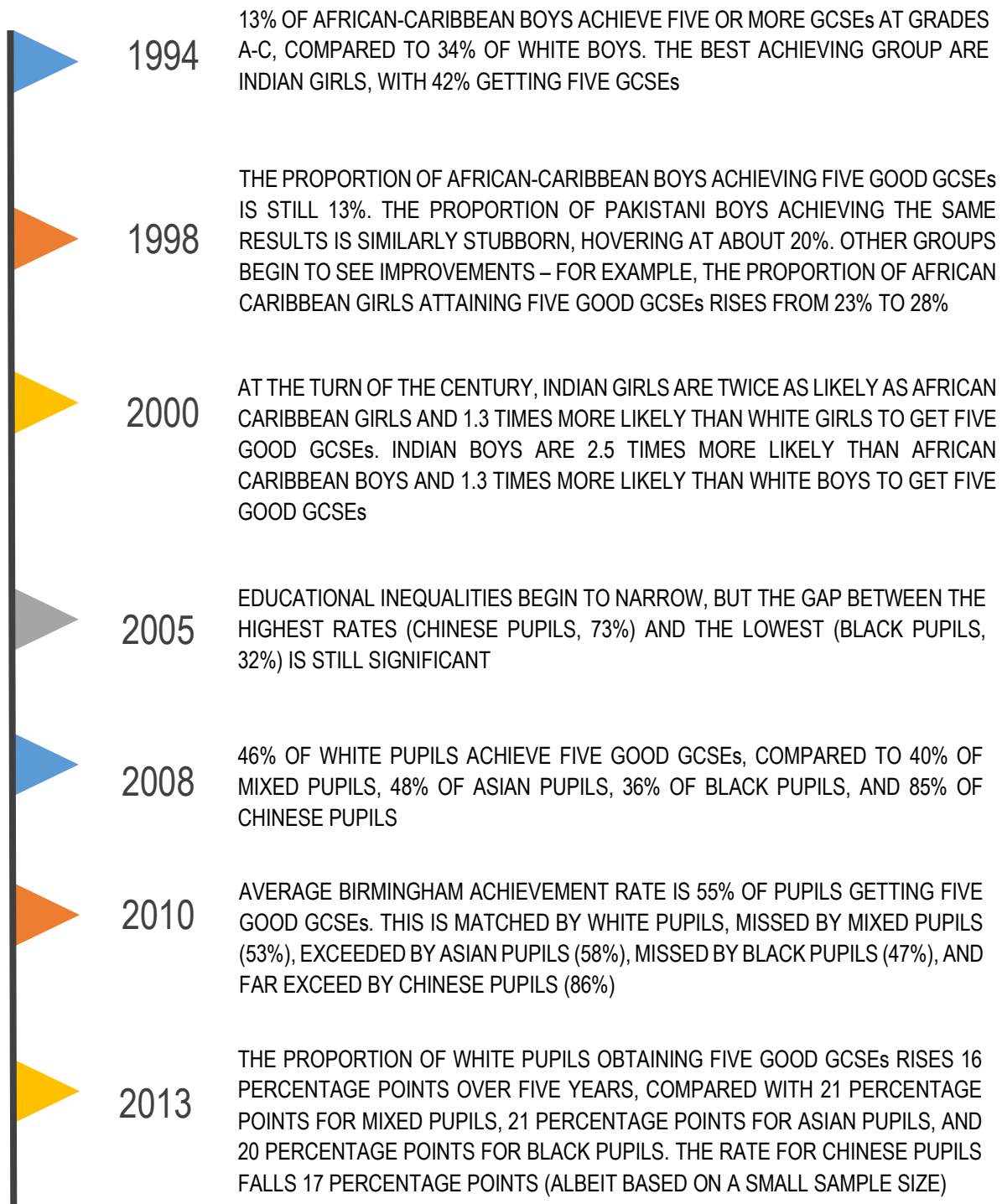
As figure 7 shows, over the last 20 years there have been reductions in the proportion of disabled people who are unemployed compared to non-disabled people. During this period disability benefits have been introduced and removed: the impact of this needs to be explored. There have also been increases in the percentage of disabled people who are economically active. Yet if we pause to look at the trend, we can see that between 2001 and 2011 there was actually a slight reduction in the number of disabled people economically active (working or looking for work). Thus even with reductions in unemployment, disabled people are still facing mounting challenges in engaging with the broader labour market in the city.

Figure 7: Economic activity by disability



EDUCATION

Data to describe progress on equality in education has been readily available in Birmingham for many years – partly because there is a consistent population that can be assessed and measured, and partly because Birmingham’s education department has been at the cutting edge of statistical analysis in this field. This is a heavily reported field of work, so we will keep headlines brief. Generally a lot of attention has been placed on inequalities in GCSE attainment so we start the story there.



The preceding table describes the great strides that have been made by the city in reducing ethnic inequalities in attainment at GCSE level over the past 15 years. However, as brap³⁷ and others have argued, at times another story is at work behind the headline figures. The attainment gap (pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C) has reduced significantly between different ethnic groups. However, attainment has been measured using different indicators over that time. For example, from 2005 onwards an additional measure has been used: the percentage of pupils attaining five good GCSEs *including English and maths*. This was as a result of lobbying by many (including brap) who argued that including English and maths in the indicator gave a more meaningful representation of attainment in relation to the expectations of the labour market and further education providers. The table below compares the differences between levels of attainment with and without the inclusion of English and maths. These figures are for 2013 only, the most recent results available at time of writing:

Figure 8: % of pupils in Birmingham achieving 5 GCSEs by ethnicity (2013)

		% ACHIEVING 5+ GCSEs A*-C	% ACHIEVING 5+ GCSEs A*-C INCLUDING ENGLISH AND MATHS
BLACK AFRICAN*	All	87	59
	Boys	96	56
	Girls	89	61
BLACK CARIBBEAN	All	88	53
	Boys	85	45
	Girls	92	62
BANGLADESHI	All	91	66
	Boys	88	62
	Girls	94	70
INDIAN	All	95	76
	Boys	93	68
	Girls	96	84
PAKISTANI	All	87	55
	Boys	84	51
	Girls	90	60
WHITE**	All	87	61
	Boys	85	55
	Girls	89	66
TOTAL PUPILS	All	88	60
	Boys	85	55
	Girls	90	65

NOTES: a) those with two or more percentage points lower than Birmingham average are highlighted in red; b) 'Black African' includes Somali ethnic group; c) 'White' includes White British and White Other.

³⁷ brap (2004) *System or Stereotype*

As the table illustrates, the indicators used to assess equality have a huge bearing on the story that is revealed – a difference of thirty percentage points in the highlighted (red) examples above. In the current employment market, securing English and maths qualifications are often critical to progression. Yet young people from Black Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds (particularly boys) continue to lag behind. This is different from the narrative that is commonly heard in the city – that the attainment gap has been largely closed.

In the previous section, we talked about how ethnicity-specific attainment plans for different groups have been used (particularly in the 2000s) to address the attainment gap. While these have had some success in helping pupils achieve 5+ A*-C GCSEs, there are clearly still significant inequalities faced by some groups. This shows that even in a field as well-researched and well-documented as educational attainment, it can still be difficult to assess the true impact of specific equality policies or interventions – and moreover, the outcomes that matter locally may sometimes be further obscured by national policy directives.

And of course gender and race inequality in educational attainment remain closely linked to wider patterns of child poverty and deprivation in cities like Birmingham. Only 54% of Black Caribbean boys and 55% of White British boys in their last year of primary school who received free school meals in 2013 achieved Key Stage 2 Combined Reading, Writing and Maths (Level 4) compared to the local authority average of 73% for all pupils. Unless we are also able to address the disproportionate impact of poverty and deprivation on some ethnic minority and White British children in Birmingham it's unlikely we will be able to address inequalities in educational attainment.

We are also making slow progress in addressing the disproportionately high level of exclusion faced by mixed heritage and African Caribbean pupils in the city. As a snap-shot of progress, the table below describes how in 1999/2000 African Caribbean pupils were 3.1 times more likely to face a fixed-term exclusion compared to the average for the overall school population. This likelihood has not reduced much compared to other ethnic groups – with African Caribbean and mixed heritage pupils still overrepresented in fixed-term exclusions. There are also continued disparities in permanent exclusions (though the small sample size involved make comparisons less robust, which why these data have been omitted).

Figure 9: Fixed term exclusions by ethnicity in Birmingham

	1999/2000	2009/10
	Likelihood of experiencing fixed term exclusion compared to average	Likelihood of experiencing fixed term exclusion compared to average
African Caribbean	+3.1	+2.2
Bangladeshi	-0.4	-0.6
Indian	-0.6	-0.7
Mixed heritage	+3.2	+1.7
Pakistani	-0.4	-0.6
White	-0.2	+0.2
Other	-0.6	+1.7

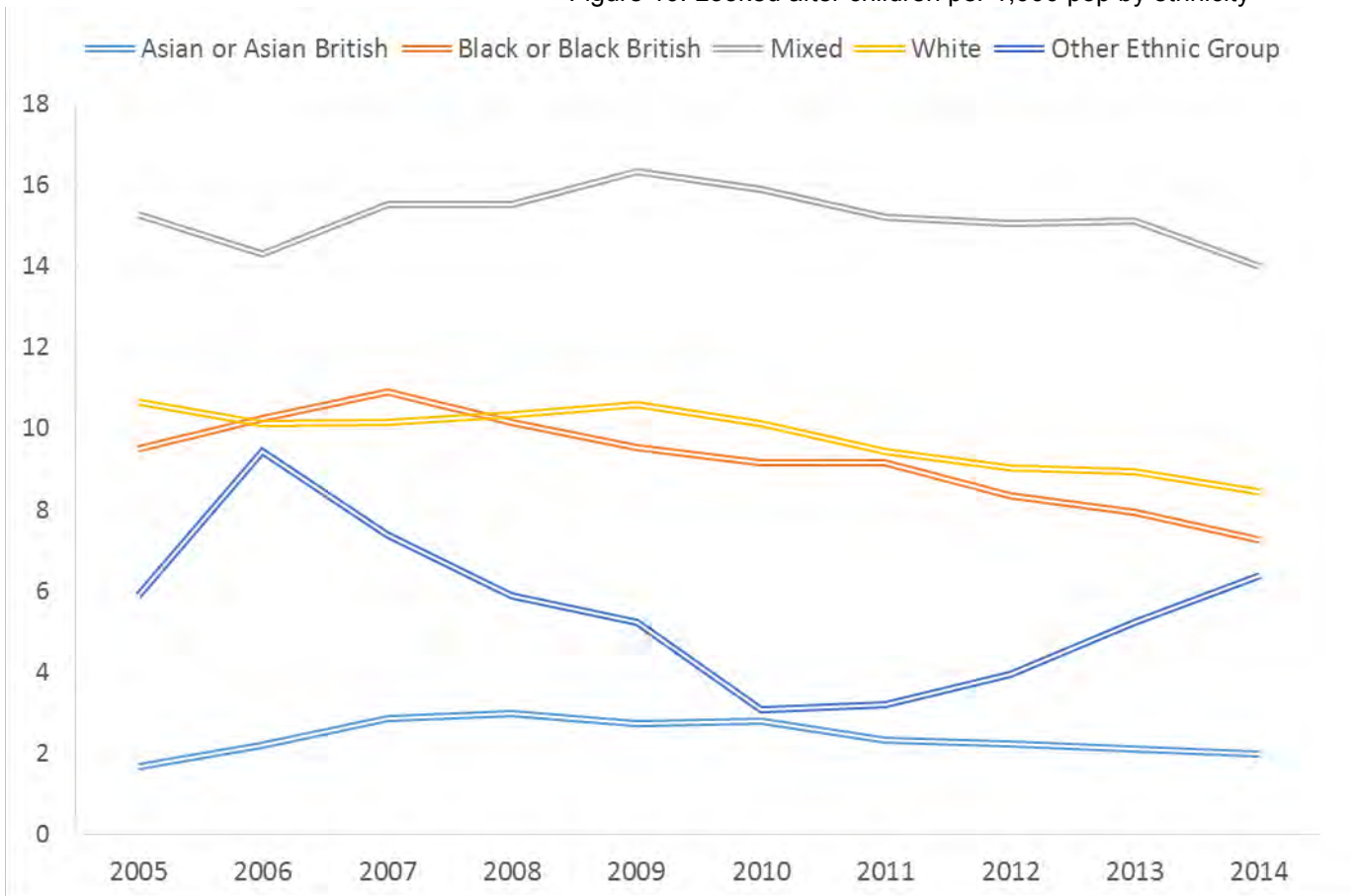
CHILD PROTECTION

There are a number of different ways to gain a measure of the number of children in need. In this section, we are looking at just one: the number of children provided with care and accommodation by children's services.

Figure 10 shows the number of children in this category per 1,000 of the child population. (This means that in 2005, for example, for every 1,000 Asians under 18, two were looked after by Birmingham City Council.) The most obvious disparity relates to the large number of looked after children from multiple heritage backgrounds. Currently, young people from this background make up less than 10% of the child population, but over 20% of looked after children.

As outlined elsewhere, the underrepresentation of Asian children in these statistics is not necessarily a positive outcome and may suggest reticence on the part of particular communities to report child protection issues.³⁸

Figure 10: Looked after children per 1,000 pop by ethnicity



³⁸ See brap (2011) *Child protection and BME communities* and Owen, C. and Statham, J. (2009) *Disproportionality in Child Welfare*

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

This report has described the journey of equality policy and practice in Birmingham – and how this has been influenced by a range of different political, economic, and demographic changes.

In some respects, the importance of equality is now much more firmly embedded in policy-making in Birmingham than was the case twenty or thirty years ago. There are signs that public authorities are recognising that equality practice can help them achieve their wider corporate objectives and increasingly equality is a mainstream rather than 'stand-alone' pursuit. Yet, at the same time, some aspects of equality practice on the ground have changed very little since the work of Birmingham's Race Relations Unit in the early-1980s. For example, equality practice continues to rely heavily on five key methods:

- improving access, outreach, and information sharing with traditionally excluded groups (e.g. translation services, sharing information with community groups about services to improve uptake)
- checking that equality systems and 'processes' are followed – producing and reviewing policies, conducting impact assessments and monitoring uptake of services, and (to a lesser extent) inequalities in customer satisfaction rates. This tends to emphasise equality primarily as a function of service delivery and to a lesser degree of HR and employment practice
- training – with the principal focus on making sure public service staff understand equality legislation
- community engagement and consultation – ensuring that the views and needs of traditionally excluded groups are adequately represented when developing/improving services
- community development and managing community relations

This is not to say there have not been new developments. There is now, for example, an increased focus on partnership working to achieve equality outcomes for service users and an increased interest in the role of leaders in developing the type of organisations that can respond proactively to equality challenges. However, the unchanging character of some aspects of equality practice in Birmingham (and elsewhere for that matter) raises important questions given the lack of progress that has been made in some of areas we considered in section 2. If these approaches are not delivering what Birmingham wants or needs, what are the alternatives?

Whilst we do have some opinions on this topic – and are trialling new approaches all that time – we thought we would close with some observations that we hope will help stimulate debate about the future of equality practice in the city. This was very much the intention both of this short research project and this report.

BIRMINGHAM'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

In Frank Capra's film *It's a Wonderful Life* the lead character, George Bailey, on the brink of committing suicide, is visited by an angel who gives him a glimpse of how things might have been had George not been born. We don't want to give away the ending, but needless to say George is shown that his life has made an immeasurable impact on the lives of other people in his town. He doesn't realise it, but the little things he's done – the words of encouragement, the odd helping hand, standing up for his principles – have inspired and consoled friends, family, and those around him. Similarly, as much as we suggest past equality approaches have not always delivered, we don't know how bad things would have been without them.

Also, unlike George, Birmingham unfortunately doesn't have the benefit of a glimpse into what might have been had we adopted different approaches to tackling equality. It appears from this short overview, though, that in many respects Birmingham has been an unequal place to live. Work by Wilkinson and Pickett³⁹ has shown that unequal societies tend to experience greater social problems and quality of life is worse as a result – not just for the poorest, but also for the richest members of society too. If we continue on our current trajectory of addressing inequality, particularly in the current economic environment, there is every likelihood that our city will be more unequal and more polarised in twenty years than it is today.

Our review of practice has suggested that, despite a tweak here and a tweak there, broadly speaking our approach to promoting equality has been heavily paper-based and has relied on a small range of tried (but not necessarily robustly tested) interventions. We continue to put our faith in long-established models of equality intervention, despite low levels of return.

This leaves us with an important question: what will it take to prompt change? Do we believe that change is possible? What is our 'tipping point'? When can we no longer manage with the consequences of the gap between rich and poor in the city? When can we no longer manage the significantly higher proportion of unemployment amongst some ethnic minority groups or the staggeringly high school exclusions rates? Do we believe we have reached that tipping point and we need to start thinking more futuristically and more radically about how we promote equality in the city in the future.

Yet this future-thinking approach moves against the tide. Historically we have put energy into work on equality and cohesion in response to crisis. In the past thirty years Birmingham has been caught on the back foot many times. A recent example has been the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham schools, but there have been many more. We often miss opportunities to *anticipate* change and to think more proactively about the kind of equality practice we need to see. Crisis management leaves less room for creative thinking and limits our ability to engage communities and the wider public in policy-making and especially in the increasingly difficult decisions arising from public spending cuts and austerity.

While desperate, the current economic and public spending climate does present some opportunities for creative service redesign and improvement – doing more differently, not just doing more with less. Some current policy initiatives – such as the passage into law of the Social

³⁹ Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, L. (2010) *The Spirit Level*

Value Act 2012⁴⁰ – present opportunities, as do the city’s Living Wage policy and the ground-breaking Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility (BBC4SR), which seeks to drive social value throughout the whole of the council’s supply-chain.⁴¹

This demonstrates that even in the most difficult circumstances, Birmingham *is* able to take a creative and proactive stance when this is necessary, and initiatives like the Living Wage and the BBC4SR have the potential to be powerful tools in helping to respond to inequality.

This is the kind of thinking we need to see more of in the future as the city seeks to recover from the most cataclysmic shake-up of public sector spending in a generation. It is also significant that the current economic and public spending climate has largely forced authorities to reconsider – indeed, abandon – their practice of many years, which was simply to ameliorate service failure by ‘bolting on’ extra provision for particular groups. Birmingham cannot hope to spend its way out of inequality – not now and not in the foreseeable future. This is why we need to be focusing more on service re-design and change of practice rather than the kind of box-ticking and checking that has previously passed for ‘equality monitoring’. We also need to focus much more clearly on *partnership* between agencies in the city and establishing a clear and shared vision for promoting equality in the future.

On what foundations then might an alternative, futuristic approach to equality be based on in our city? brap are planning to run a series of events with colleagues across the city to answer this question. We end this report with some suggestions of fruitful areas for further discussion and development.

GETTING ON THE SAME EQUALITY PAGE

We need crystal clear clarity about what we mean by ‘equality’ in this city. This actually sounds quite simple but it is surprising how many different answers you get to this question between and within organisations and communities across the city. When equality strategies are developed by public authorities this is often done in silos by separate agencies with their own particular areas of focus. Yet people’s lives are rarely lived in this way. The effect of public sector spending cuts, changes to the welfare regime, re-design of public services, discrimination and inequality in the labour market, in mental health services and in the education system are felt in a *cumulative* way by people. We all play a role in securing the equality of others in society in multiple and sometimes complex ways. Our views about what being treated ‘equally’ means and our responsibility in achieving this need to be shared and agreed upon across different communities and across different public agencies in the city.

As public spending has reduced (and will continue to reduce) in the city there will be more impetus for organisations like the City Council to work in partnership with other agencies (both public, private and voluntary sector) to get things done. In some respects the previous landscape

⁴⁰ For more on the new legislation and social value, see the archive of resources on the Birmingham and Solihull Social Economy Consortium website <http://bssec.org.uk/policy-issues/public-services-and-social-value/> and the enacted legislation <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3/enacted>.

⁴¹ See <http://www.finditinbirmingham.com/feature/charter>.

of one or two dominant public sector agencies in the city has changed dramatically. This is a great opportunity to start from scratch and agree a simple, popular, and marketable vision for progressing equality in Birmingham.

A ROAD MAP

But how do we get there? How do we identify and balance the needs and interests of such a diverse range of people living in this city? How do we help *all* people feel that they have been able to contribute their views, and that whatever decision has been taken regarding the allocation of resources – even if it didn't go 'in their favour' – is nonetheless fair? The stakes are high, and anti-immigration groups all too ready to utilise these difficulties to further their own political agenda. We would like to say a few things about this.

To develop this vision 'identity' is probably not the answer. People's identity is important. It can affect how people are treated by others. Yet when we put our faith in fixed views (often from well-established representatives of communities) about what it means to be 'black', to be 'disabled', to be 'gay', to be 'Muslim' in this city we often only hear half of the picture. Asking representatives and community leaders to tell us what communities want and asking communities to 'compete' with each other in this way for resources or for political influence will only get us so far. At worst, it will lead to disagreement between groups who all believe they are more deserving or more in need of help than their fellow residents. It can also lead to disengagement from efforts to progress equality where people feel 'equality isn't about me'. How many times have you heard people say 'equality' is about black people in inner city wards, not about White British estates on the outskirts of the city? How many times have you heard people say 'it's about Muslims getting special treatment like halal food, but what about my rights?'

If we want people to feel 'included' and part of efforts to promote equality across the city – if we want people to recognise that everybody can benefit from equality and everybody has a role in promoting it – then we need to go beyond identity. Identity helps us to identify how inequality is socially patterned and it helps us to understand people's experiences. But it shouldn't be the principal route to determining the type of society we want to create. To do this we need to emphasise the needs, the aspirations, and the hopes we share as humans.

Here's what we need to do: Birmingham has an opportunity to be the first city that judges its progress on equality based on a resident entitlement model. This will be based on the rights and entitlements that all people share and aspire to. It will be informed by what people think is important and by the *common* needs and concerns of people from different communities in the city. In other words, it will involve much more clarity about the 'domains' of equality that are important to a wide range of people in the city. The Equality Measurement Framework (EMF) at a national level does something similar and includes indicators for adults and children.⁴² Examples for adults in Birmingham (some of which are adapted from the EMF) might include:

⁴² http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/emf/briefing_note.pdf

- a fair chance to be recruited for a job in the city irrespective of your background, where you live or some other aspect of your identity
- access to healthcare, without discrimination and in a culturally sensitive way
- freedom from violence including sexual and domestic violence and violence based on who you are
- being treated with equality and non-discrimination before the law (e.g. stop and search)
- the ability to learn about a range of cultures and beliefs and acquire the skills necessary to participate in a diverse society, including learning English
- fair access to an adequate and secure standard of living including nutrition, clothing, housing, warmth, social security, social services and utilities, and being cared for and supported when necessary
- the ability to get around inside and outside the home, and to access transport and public places
- choice and control over where and how you live
- the ability to access emotional support
- the ability to develop and maintain self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence
- freedom to spend time with, and care for, others, including wider family
- the ability to be free in matters of sexual relationships and reproduction
- freedom to live without fear of humiliation, harassment, or abuse based on who you are
- freedom to engage in cultural practices, in a community with other members of your chosen group or groups and across communities

This is just a selection to prompt discussion, some of which can be measured and many involve a multi-agency response (across private, public, and voluntary sector organisations) to secure those entitlements. Of course, these would need to be consulted upon and agreed by different people across the city. But once a universal list of entitlements like this for residents were drawn up across the city these could then form the basis of a clear and shared vision of what is important to residents and what a good quality of life would look like in the city. This would then be measured to see whether all people are enjoying this – and areas where more effort needs to be put in to achieve more equal outcomes for all residents.

Adopting this ‘resident entitlement’ approach is easy to understand and helps residents (old and new) to be more aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens in the city. It focuses on the rights we enjoy as humans rather than our differences. It also helps sign people up to a joint project to create the kind of society we can all broadly agree upon. It encourages cross-community work and collective campaigning to help progress particular domains of equality (such as fair access to healthcare without discrimination) rather than separate (and sometimes competing) efforts to progress the needs and interests of particular groups.

TO BE HONEST

Once we've got our vision – what do we do about it? Firstly, we've got to be honest. In Birmingham (as we suspect in many other areas) we have a tendency to amplify our successes and put the lid on our failures. This may be, in part, due to our previous experience of being typecast nationally as an uninspiring, industrial heartland where people have funny accents. Yet if we're to develop a compelling message about how to progress equality we have to acknowledge our failures as well as our successes. A city affected by inequality is part of who we have been and who we are. It would be disingenuous to think that excluded and deprived communities in the city don't feel left out of Birmingham's narratives of success in economic growth, its booming digital and creative industries scene and the attraction of top class restaurants and penthouse city-centre living. Our diverse, complex resident-base is what makes us great as a city. If we are to harness its potential we need to publicly acknowledge that we have all played a part in excluding the most deprived from participating in our city's success. We then need to share a clear vision for what we're all going to do about it.

Secondly, we then need to plan a programme of multi-agency, multi-sector activities to measure and improve progress against the type of resident entitlement list we include above. To develop this multi-agency response we need to draw upon the opportunities that localism affords us. Constituency and neighbourhood level discussions will play a crucial role in defining our response to inequality. As the public spending pot decreases, we need be much clearer about the respective roles of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations in responding to equality priorities at a local level. For example, how do we work more collaboratively with faith-based organisations to agree a shared programme to respond to inequality in an area? How do we develop public sector investment strategies that complement our vision for equality?

STAYING AHEAD OF THE GAME

We need to take segregation and cohesion seriously. Unfortunately we have spent most of our time and energy responding to community cohesion challenges in times of crisis and in response to riots and community disgruntlement. It can feel at times that this is more about avoiding widespread social discontent and crisis management than thinking proactively about creating the type of city we want to live in. For brap this would be a city in which damaging stereotypes and discrimination are challenged and where residents are familiar with the types of values by which we are expected to live together and are able to enjoy the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. We think the ideas we have outlined in this section of the report offer a foundation for achieving that type of city, though clearly there is more work to be done in defining what we mean by cohesion, whether this is the right way to describe it, and how we explain its benefits to the man or woman on the street.

If you're fed up with the way that we've 'done' equality and cohesion in the city, if you feel it's not giving us what we need, getting in touch with brap is a good place to start. No one agency will be able to create this type of change on their own. We need to join together to achieve something new. If anything, we hope this report has shown that sticking to old equality models isn't enough – that we're doing a disservice to future generations of the city if we don't draw a line in the sand now and take steps to create a new vision of equality for Birmingham.

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL EQUALITY SCHEMES 2007-10

DISABILITY	GENDER	RACE
INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES	LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMITMENT	LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE COMMITMENT
Encouraging the active participation of disabled people in sport, arts and other community based activities for recreation and personal development. Achieved via better data collection and seeking investment for / designing services that specifically meet disabled people's needs	Conduct gender-related equality impact assessments; ensure policies meet needs of transgender people; and conduct relevant equality monitoring.	Conduct effective race equality monitoring; monitor performance on race equality; and conduct relevant equality monitoring; coordinate various consultation / working groups (e.g. community cohesion group).
INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN DESIGNING SERVICES	CONSULTATION, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP	CONSULTATION, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP
Establishing robust mechanisms to enable disabled people in influencing the design of services. Building the capacity and raising the awareness of groups acting on behalf of disabled people. Ensuring that information presented by the City Council is accessible to disabled people.	Review consultation and engagement activities on regeneration programmes to ensure there are more women on programme boards. Increase proportion of women consulted on the community cohesion strategy, increase proportion of women undertaking impact assessments, 'gender proof' the community cohesion strategy.	Develop a programme of community development work/ support for key strategic BME groups and communities. Coordinate Council's work on Equality Standard for Local Government. Ensure race equality is integral to Council's communication and engagement strategy.
SERVICE DELIVERY	SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE	SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER CARE
Health and social care: a range of service-specific interventions to improve services for disabled people (e.g. specialist assessment and care management for those with complex or specialist sensory impairments). Advocacy for and greater inclusion of people with mental health problems. Housing: a range of (largely) paper-based strategy/ policy actions to help improve housing and support for disabled people/ to promote independent living. Strategy/ policy actions include, for example, improved equality monitoring, improved needs	Largely strategy/policy-based actions – relating to developing clear targets/ strategies across council directorates. Strategies mentioned relate to: addressing domestic violence; improving representation of women in consultation on regeneration programmes; improving safety on public transport; reducing teenage pregnancy; improving employment choices of young people; meeting needs of older women.	Housing: carrying out reviews of strategy and equality impact assessments, increasing participation of BME groups in consultation, conducting needs assessments and improving equality monitoring. Resources: deliver programmes of work relating to equality impact needs assessment, meeting requirements of equality standard and relevant legislation.

DISABILITY	GENDER	RACE
<p>analysis for particular groups, reviews of particular strategies or data.</p> <p>Transportation: a number of actions to encourage investment in the City's transportation system to support disabled people. Improved engagement of disabled people in design of services.</p> <p>Education: improved monitoring of outcomes for disabled pupils, greater engagement of disabled pupils and their parents in decisions about services, improvements to process (e.g. issuing of statements and conducting transition plans), training and development for public sector workers.</p>		<p>Children and families: improve understanding and accountability of managers and service providers, support responses to equality legislation.</p> <p>Development: improve economic development in wards with high BME populations, equality and diversity training for staff.</p> <p>Adults and communities: establish workforce monitoring and analysis system and ensure equality impact assessment is undertaken, establish targets for under-representation in workforce.</p> <p>Constituencies: training on equality legislation, providing relevant equality data to managers, monitoring progress and sharing good practice.</p> <p>Hate crime: improve reporting and monitoring arrangements and train key staff.</p> <p>Regeneration: follow up work in Lozells to address economic and social disadvantage/ coordinate community cohesion group.</p>
EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING	EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
<p>Ensuring a better representation for disabled people in the City Council workforce via work experience placements and recruitment events specifically targeting disabled people. Training for all employees on disability awareness and personal development courses for disabled employees. Enabling disabled people to participate in employment representative bodies.</p>	<p>A number of policy/strategy-based actions (such as conducting reviews and setting relevant targets to improve gender equality and flexible working). For example: "Consider the need to have objectives that address the causes of any differences between the pay of men and women that are related to their sex."</p>	<p>Address under representation of BME employees at senior levels, recruit in more innovative ways and review positive action training schemes. Develop management competencies which incorporate managing diversity. Improved processes for harassment reporting. Monitor HR policies, analyse data and publish.</p>

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NOTES AND SOURCES

Figure 1: Census 1991, 2001, 2011

Figure 2: Census 1991 (households with over 1 person room), Census 2001 (household occupancy ratings -1 or less), and Census 2011 (household occupancy rating -1 or less)

Figure 3: Census 1991, 2001, 2011. Gender pay gap data on previous page calculated using annual survey of hours and earnings 1997-2013

Figure 4: Claimant stocks and flows 2005-2014 compared with Census 2011 population data

Figure 5: Census 1991, 2001, 2011

Figure 6: Annual Population Survey. Due to changes in the ethnicity questions on the Annual Population Survey during 2011 these estimates should not be used as a timeseries. They can, however, be used to estimate the relative levels of economic activity of the different ethnic groupings.

Figure 7: Census 1991 (comparing limiting long-term illness with no with limiting long-term illness), Census 2001 (comparing limiting long-term illness with no limiting long-term illness), Census 2011 (comparing day-to-day activities limited a lot and day-to-day activities limited a little with day-to-day activities not limited)

Figure 8: Department for Education

Figure 9: Department for Education

Figure 10: data submitted by Birmingham City Council to Department of Education compared with Census 2011 ethnicity data. Supplied via FOI request. Figures for 2014 include numbers to August only

The chronology of educational attainment on page 36 is based on data from a variety of sources, including Abbas, Tahir (2006) *Muslims in Britain, UK: Background Paper for COMPAS* and Birmingham City Council Education and Arts Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2002) *Cultural Diversity in Schools*. Data is also taken from annual Department of Education releases (www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/index.html).

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