

Speech: Helping people from ethnic minority backgrounds into work

Thank you Kirsty and the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) for inviting me to speak today. It is an absolute pleasure.

But more importantly – thank you for publishing this interesting [Race, Ethnicity and Employment report](#).

We have made huge progress in recent decades to improve the opportunities for ethnic minorities in the UK.

But its studies like this that help us identify where the challenges still lie.

And what we in government can do to tackle them.

I'm going to start by talking about Doctor Who.

For those of you who have heard me speak before you will know it is my go-to programme for anecdotes.

In a recent episode the new Doctor, and what a pleasure it is that we finally have a female Doctor, she and companions travelled back to 1950s Alabama.

On the eve of Rosa Parks' historic bus protest that sparked the Civil Rights movement.

What was remarkable was not only Rosa Parks' personal bravery.

But it was the incomprehension of the characters from 2018 when faced with the institutional racism of 1950s America.

This well-loved family programme brought the subject of racial injustice to Sunday night viewing, making it something to be talked about and not ignored.

And it showed how different the experience of ethnic minorities now is from decades past.

But let's be clear, discrimination does still exist.

And as a recent incident on Ryanair sadly showed, so does racism.

On a personal level, when my father settled in the UK in the 70s, he was not easily able to find a job in line with his experience and qualifications.

There may have been many reasons for this. But I expect his experience may not have been dissimilar from that of others, from an ethnic minority background.

So he set up his own business and, thankfully, made a success of it.

But that was then, of course.

Now we have cause for celebration, as those from an ethnic minority background share in the booming jobs market we have created. Ethnic minority employment is at a record high.

And the employment gap between ethnic minorities and white groups is below 10% for the first time ever on record.

In fact, we are almost three quarters of the way to achieving the government's target of increasing ethnic minority employment by 20% by 2020.

Since 2010 we have seen 3.3 million more people in work overall, of those 1.15 million were from ethnic minorities.

That means growth in ethnic minority employment of 36% – 3 times the growth in overall employment – closing the gap faster than ever before.

Cause for celebration, but not inaction.

The ethnic minority employment rate is 65.5%.

A record high, but that's still the same level as the overall UK employment rate was in 1984.

So I welcome progress, and I welcome the increasing rate of progress.

But when people from ethnic minorities face the same employment prospects that others enjoyed decades ago, that progress will never be enough.

Tackling injustices is at the heart of the Prime Minister's agenda.

When she launched the Race Disparity Audit (RDA) last year it was the first time a UK government looked overall at the impact of race across many aspects of life.

And we are leading the world in this approach.

The RDA has raised a lot of issues.

But above all, it has shown that we cannot treat ethnic minorities as one single group, with the same challenges.

Something I am glad to see ERSA's report also highlights.

To give some examples.

The British black employment rate is lower than that of the British Indian community, at 67.6 per cent.

In the British Chinese community it's 60.6 per cent, while the average rate in the British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi communities is just 54.8 per cent.

British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi workers are far more likely to be in the lowest skilled occupation groups and receive the lowest average hourly pay.

While the British Chinese community has a gender employment gap of just 6.6 percentage points, lower than the white British or UK average, among the British Indian community it's 12.3 percentage points.

And that's exactly why our approach is tailored to the specific challenges of different communities.

My department has identified 20 'challenge areas' across the country.

These are areas where the employment gap is highest and the ethnic minority population is the greatest.

We are targeting these places with specialist support, trialling new interventions.

Including mentoring programmes and targeted projects building on existing community networks.

Youth

Overall youth unemployment may be at a record low, but it is still hard for young people to see themselves in jobs which are effectively invisible to them.

Jobs where they do not see people like themselves succeeding.

That is why our network of mentoring circles helps open their horizons, bringing young people from ethnic minorities together – voluntarily – in their local jobcentre.

These young people are being mentored in our jobcentres by major employers like HSBC and Fujitsu, giving them the self-confidence and skills and aspiration they need.

I have visited one of these mentoring programmes in north London.

And saw for myself how transformative they can be for youngsters.

Particularly when the mentoring is provided by someone from a similar background to them.

So far, 63 mentoring circles have taken place in 21 jobcentres, and more are being prepared for next year.

A lack of expectations can do more than just drain ambition and hope – it can drive young people onto the wrong path.

That is why proactive intervention can be so important in fuelling their success.

Women

British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi women have some of the lowest employment rates in the UK.

Part of the reason for this may be cultural expectations of caring responsibilities in the home.

Determining what is a choice, and what may be the result of a cultural pressure is not straight forward.

But we must ensure that women know that when they choose to work, they can and will be valued.

That is why in Birmingham Yardley, an area with low employment rates for women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, we are reaching out to them to build a trusted relationship for the first time.

By building the women's confidence, and their knowledge about job opportunities.

And by working in existing community networks, we can bring them closer to the labour market so they can make a choice about their future in it.

Creating full employment among ethnic minorities communities is not just the right thing to do.

It makes good business sense.

As ERSA's members already know, an inclusive employer is also a successful employer.

And that includes the bottom line.

Full representation of ethnic minority individuals across the labour market, through participation and progression in their careers, would boost the economy by an estimated £24 billion a year.

And it's something the whole of government is acting on.

Take my colleagues in the Department for Education.

They are working with thousands of employers and the National Apprenticeship Service to get more young people from ethnic minorities into apprenticeships, a route into almost any career from nuclear engineering to law.

We have pledged to increase the number of apprentices from an ethnic minority background by 20 per cent by 2020.

And last year 55,000 apprentices came from such backgrounds.

Conclusion

The more we understand about where inequality exists, the more we can do to tackle it.

So again I thank ERSA for this thought -provoking report.

It joins a huge bank of evidence, including the Race Disparity Audit and the future findings from the consultation on the Ethnic Pay Gap.

Our work to tackle inequality is ongoing, and will be for some time yet.

But arming ourselves with this evidence means progress will be quicker.

So that when the Doctor Who of the future travels back to our own time, and she and her companions find it difficult to comprehend the injustices which still exist today – that will be because we have tackled them and created a future where everyone has the same opportunity to succeed in life.

[News story: Innovation loans will help UK businesses improve manufacturing](#)

In the second round of innovation loans funding, £12 million has been offered to 17 businesses developing innovative manufacturing processes or using new materials in production. The companies will use the funding to carry out R&D projects to scale up production and commercialise new technologies.

Successful companies

Successful applicants to the second round of loans funding include:

- [Callaly](#): a new feminine care product designed in London and manufactured entirely in the UK
- [KwickScreen](#): portable printed room partitions, based and manufactured in London
- [The Electrospinning Company](#): clinical-grade biomaterials
- [Valuechain](#): manufacturing supply chain software. ValueChain has offices worldwide in China and India, as well as across the UK
- [Ashwoods Electric Motors](#): smaller, lighter and more efficient permanent magnet electric motors

Patient capital for disruptive businesses

Thang Vo-Ta, CEO and co-founder of loans recipient Callaly, said:

There's a danger of impatient capital demanding instant returns. If you want to build something right, to the highest standards and without any compromise, keeping all your research and product development here in the UK, you need patient partners.

That's exactly what we're getting [with an innovation loan].

Helping UK businesses to scale up

Innovate UK's deputy executive chair and business officer, Simon Edmonds, said:

Innovation in manufacturing and materials requires finance that understands and accepts the risk in new technologies, so we're excited about the opportunities that innovation loans are now unlocking for UK businesses to invest in the delivery of new products and services in this important sector for the UK economy.

We've seen continuing high levels of demand for this new, affordable, flexible and low-interest finance option for innovation and we're confident it will help potential UK businesses to scale up, create high-value jobs and ultimately accelerate economic growth and improve the quality of life across all regions.

About innovation loans

Innovate UK introduced its pilot programme of innovation loans to some of the UK's most innovative businesses to scale. To do this, the programme will help tackle the key issues facing innovative companies. If successful in the competitive application process, businesses can borrow between £100,000 and £1 million.

Apply to the latest innovation loans competition

Up to £10 million is available in the latest innovation loans competition to help businesses turn their game-changing ideas into a commercial reality. Innovate UK is looking for later-stage projects developing new products or services, or using existing ones in an innovative way.

Projects from any area of technology or industry sector will be considered, as long as it will lead to gains in productivity or sustainable business growth.

Press release: Readout of PM call with Leo Varadkar: 5 November 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to the Taoiseach this morning to take stock of the progress being made in the negotiations, including on the Northern Ireland backstop. In a constructive conversation, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach discussed the remaining issues.

They agreed that the intention was that the backstop should only be a temporary arrangement and that the best solution to the Northern Ireland border would be found by agreeing a future relationship between the UK and the EU. In order to ensure that the backstop, if ever needed, would be temporary, the Prime Minister said that there would need to be a mechanism through which the backstop could be brought to an end.

She affirmed the UK's commitment to the Belfast Good Friday Agreement and to avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach agreed that discussions should continue.

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Published 5 November 2018

[News story: Future assessment of GCSE computer science](#)

Ofqual today (5 November) [launched a consultation on long-term arrangements for the assessment of programming skills in GCSE computer science](#).

Earlier this year, following consultation, we [changed the assessment arrangements for GCSE computer science](#) because of evidence that the confidentiality of some of the programming tasks had been compromised. These revised arrangements mean that for students taking exams in 2019 and 2020 their GCSE computer science grades will be based on their exam performance alone.

We discussed with teachers and subject associations the ways by which students' programming skills could be assessed in the longer term. We concluded that it is not possible to use non-exam assessment in the qualification to assess programming skills in a way that is manageable, reliable and fair. We also concluded that exam boards could assess programming skills in different and potentially innovative ways under exam conditions, and that our rules should require them to do so.

For students starting their courses in 2020, who will be taking their exams in 2022, we propose that:

- all assessment, including that of programming skills, is conducted by exam.

- the assessments will require students to complete the 4 steps of designing, writing, testing and refining a program to achieve a task or solve a problem as separate or combined activities.
- the original assessment objective weightings for this qualification are reinstated, to reflect the importance of practical programming skills.

Today's consultation also proposes that the current short-term arrangements remain in place for students starting courses next September and sitting exams in this subject in 2021. This will allow exam boards to put in place revised assessments and allow teachers time to prepare. The current arrangements mean students have 20 hours set aside in their timetables to complete a programming task, and their programming skills are assessed during the exam.

Sally Collier, Ofqual Chief Regulator, said:

Practical programming skills are an important aspect of the computer science GCSE and we have carefully considered how best to assess them. Reflecting on how programming could be effectively assessed, previous experience with this qualification, and the views of those within the sector, we believe that in order to secure valid assessment and manage the risk of malpractice, programming skills should be assessed by examination.

We are keen to encourage innovation and in our consultation, launched today, we propose granting exam boards discretion over the form of exam assessment they offer. We are proposing a timetable that ensures exam boards have sufficient time to determine their approach and that teachers can select and prepare to deliver the approach that best meets the needs of their students. I encourage anyone with an interest in GCSE computer science to respond to our consultation.