

*Minority Ethnic People's  
Experiences in  
Herefordshire*

*A Report  
Commissioned by  
Herefordshire Council*

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## **Preface: the research brief**

The main objective of the survey is to undertake quantitative and qualitative research into the stable and transient minority ethnic populations of Herefordshire in relation to the following areas:

- a To gain an accurate baseline of the stable and transient minority ethnic populations of Herefordshire, in addition to census data, including data on (but not exclusively):
  - Number
  - Geographical spread
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Marital status
  - Employment
  - Income
  - Health
  - Housing tenure
  - Household makeup
  - Length of residency
  - Languages spoken
  
- b To gain an overall assessment of minority ethnic perceptions of living in Herefordshire based on (but not exclusively):
  - Their interaction with the rest of the population
  - Their interaction with service providers, especially the Council and the health services
  - The availability of formal and informal support networks and community groups in the county
  
- c To gain more detailed information on a number of specific issues, namely:
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Leisure
  - Education
  - Health
  - Social welfare
  - Culture and religion
  
- d To gain an insight into the aspirations for the future of minority ethnic residents of Herefordshire.

**The research was carried out between September 2003 and May 2004 by Professor Chris Gaine with the assistance of Dr Pam Carroll, Ms Vida Lau, Mrs Karen Burch and Ms Jasmin Rahman**

## Executive summary

- 1) The composition of the minority population of the County is not typical of the UK as a whole
- 2) The largest single group comprises the seasonal workers, mainly of eastern European origin (3000 at most<sup>1</sup>), followed by Irish (slightly over 700) and other white groups (about 2000)
- 3) The next largest groups are Romany Travellers (estimated at 750), people who are mixed white and Asian (260), Chinese (210) and Indian (168)
- 4) Some groups can clearly be identified from being in similar employment, but most minority ethnic people will have individual and unique motives for being in the County, preventing any meaningful generalisations
- 5) Aside from seasonal workers, there are low numbers of minority ethnic staff in most workplaces, even at levels where recruitment is done on a national basis. The clear exception is Hereford hospital where close to 50% of medical staff are from ethnic minorities
- 6) Minority ethnic people identified what they liked about the County as: the countryside, the people and the low crime rate. There was no pattern in what they disliked
- 7) With the exception of Travellers and Jews, it would be misleading to speak of minority 'communities'
- 8) The relative absence of such communities and the proportion of the minority population with mixed backgrounds mean that any specific needs related to culture are not easily predicted
- 9) The minority ethnic population proved harder to access than anticipated
- 10) The Jews in the County report no negative features about their life in the area
- 11) Educational provision for Traveller children is long established and compares well with provision elsewhere (with the exception, some argue, of provision for any boys with behavioural difficulties)
- 12) Health provision for Travellers is prioritised to an unusual degree but could be better supported by the Council
- 13) There are some persisting issues about Council provision for Traveller sites and stopping places which seem to be 'on hold' but which could be resolved. In this respect policy is inconsistent and incoherent
- 14) Some Romany Travellers (whether housed or not) feel a persisting hostility towards them from neighbours and the police
- 15) Other issues to do with Travellers involved youth provision, confident handling of child protection, relationships between different groups of Travellers, contact and liaison with officialdom, economic vulnerability

- 16) As regards seasonal workers, there are tensions between the market forces acting upon farmers, the physical requirements of housing large numbers of workers and meeting other reasonable needs, and public unease about the workers' presence. Herefordshire is a specific local example of the impact of changes in the European economy and the increased mobility of the European (and global) workforce. These changes are clearly not welcomed by some but are not reversible
- 17) Chinese and Bangladeshi restaurateurs reported little of the late night racial abuse that has been reported elsewhere, though it does occur and is seldom reported because of perceptions of response time
- 18) Though individuals report significant, persisting and distressing incidents, many mentioning children as perpetrators, we did not obtain consistent evidence of visible minorities facing high levels of discrimination or prejudice. *These experiences are dependent on many factors and neither part this summary statement should be cited out of context.*
- 19) The police were generally regarded positively; clear steps have been taken to improve the recording of and response to racial crimes, though there is a feeling amongst some that there is little point in reporting such things
- 20) There is evidence of poor relationships and negative expectations between *some* police officers and *some* Travellers
- 21) Almost no schools have significant numbers of minority ethnic children; the largest single group represented anywhere being Travellers (making up 4% of one school roll). One primary school had 7% minority ethnic pupils in 2003
- 22) While some parents reported concerns most who commented felt schools had dealt well with racist incidents
- 23) There is no evidence of a pattern of experiences of key services related to specific ethnicities, i.e. no group emerges as being particularly dissatisfied
- 24) Health care was regarded very positively
- 25) Environmental Health, Social Services and housing were barely mentioned by informants, most having had no contact with public provision in these areas
- 26) There is evidence of a positive climate of concern in public institutions in the County to promote acceptance of diversity. We were struck on several occasions by the support and goodwill shown towards the research by key managers and those who controlled access to data. This was echoed by other indices of official recognition of and support for diversity in exhibitions and posters
- 27) There is no pattern of the local press sensationalising or over-simplifying issues of diversity

**Footnote 1.** *The sources of these figures are discussed on page 5.*

# Research approach

## Demography

One of the goals of the research was to accumulate reliable evidence about numbers of specific groups of people. To a great extent this goal was supported by the Census carried out in 2001, with consequent data being available by the time the research was being undertaken.

However, while the Census is by far the most thorough demographic survey available, and its resources far exceed anything other researchers can hope to match, it does not provide answers to everything local service providers may wish to know:

- The considerable numbers of migrant workers in the county would not have been counted in the Census, even they had been present on any scale on the Census date, which was outside of their usual season. Their numbers have also increased to quite an extent since the Census.
- One group is known to seldom declare themselves as such on Census forms (or other official records): Travellers. This is due to the historic stigma of 'being a gypsy' and the absence of any faith that declaring themselves would bring any benefit.
- It is possible that in a growing climate of what the Runnymede Trust first called 'Islamophobia' some Muslims did not indicate their faith on the Census form (even though it was issued before the events of September 11 2001).
- Identifying one's ethnicity is not straightforward. It is known that some people of overseas descent declare themselves as ethnically British because that is how they wish to be seen. Several LEAs also experience parents from visible minorities recording their child's ethnicity for school records as 'white'.

As a result the figures and patterns we suggest in the Report are almost always composites drawn from

- The Census
- Local institutional records (such as school and college databases)
- Databases from large employers and employment agencies
- Discussion with local professionals with contact with specific groups
- Wider research evidence and experience.

Some figures are rounded where it is felt either census or other sources have built in inaccuracy.

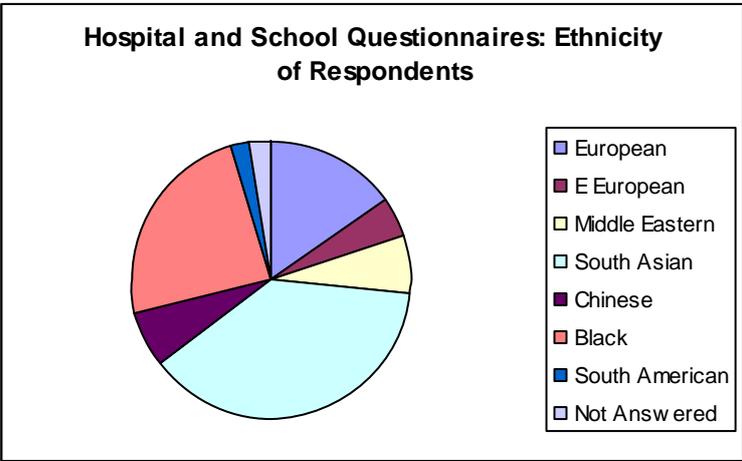
***The estimates were made in December 2003.***

***The study was undertaken between August 2003 and April 2004.***

### Contacting the relevant population

Given the variety of minority individuals, small numbers and consequent absence of cohesive minority communities, several approaches were tried in an attempt to reach the County's minority ethnic people.

- Letters and questionnaires were sent through specific institutions using organisational databases (examples of these are reproduced in Appendix One) thus preserving individuals' anonymity unless they chose to contact us. The letters explained the purpose of the research and invited people to complete the questionnaire and/or contact us for a telephone or face-to-face interview. Three routes were used:
  - the hospital trust (as the largest employer and also one which had several minority ethnic staff) which forwarded the letters through their internal post, enclosing an additional letter backing the research
  - the three post-16 colleges, who again were asked to forward letters and questionnaires in this case to minority ethnic students. They also forwarded the letters through their internal post
  - the schools, which were asked to forward letters and questionnaires to minority ethnic parents, typically by giving the envelopes to the minority ethnic children and asking them to take them home. A number of schools were unwilling to forward the letters although it was clear in the covering letter that the LEA supported the research. One decided not to forward the letter to Traveller parents, one said they only had one set of minority ethnic parents (who were Chinese), one said 'not applicable to the families concerned'. The schools who offered no explanation were contacted by phone: two no longer had minority ethnic pupils, one (with Traveller pupils) had a new head and could not account for the acting head's decision, one refused to explain their decision.



In total we received 46 returned questionnaires, about half from the hospital staff and half from parents. 80 hospital questionnaires were sent and we believe about 300 were actually sent home via schools. (The results from the college students have generally been analysed separately and integrated into the text, because for the most part those who received them were in their late teens and early 20s, so the focus of questions was slightly different and much shorter).

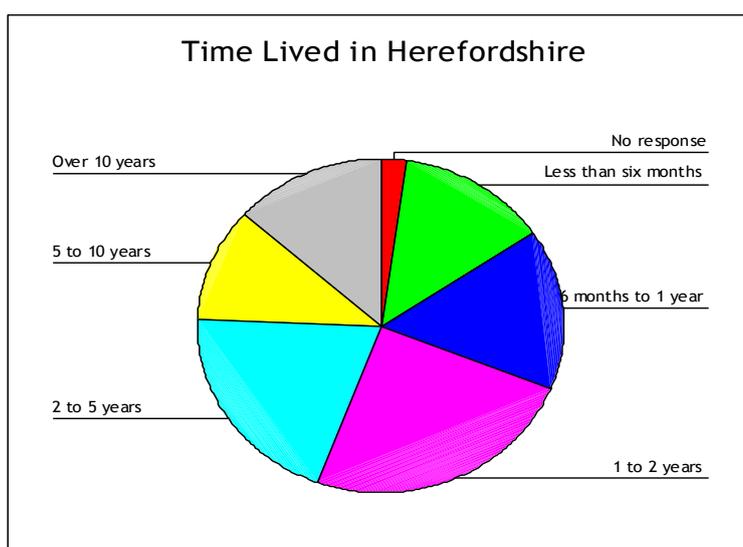
- Contacting minority ethnic students at the RNCB and interviewing them.
- Using professionals as go-betweens to establish contacts. This was particularly used to make contact with Travellers.
- Writing to and subsequently visiting minority ethnic restaurants (specifically Bangladeshi and Chinese). Interpreters were used and the letters were translated (Appendix 2).
- Interviewing seasonal workers, farmers, and recruiting agencies that organise work visas.
- Interviewing some key professionals from Police, Traveller Education and Health Service
- Interviewing others with voluntary involvement in race and ethnicity equality issues.

The forwarded letters and questionnaires produced very few interviews, which was disappointing since it is a strategy that has worked reasonably well elsewhere. The explanation may be that in the other places where we have done similar work we were able to give a local telephone contact number and indeed an institutional address rather nearer than the distance between Sussex and Hereford.

As a result we have fewer in-depth and detailed insights into minority experience in the County that we would have wished. The following table summarises something of the sources of evidence against each of the identified groups.

<i>group</i>	<i>number in County</i>	<i>interviews</i>	<i>questionnaires</i>	<i>information from professionals, allies, officials, employers etc</i>	<i>Statistics, document or policy analysis</i>
Jews	130	Jewish Council Secretary	Not used	summary circulated and approved	✓
Travellers	1000	19	Not used	6 + summary circulated & modified	✓
Seasonal Workers	3000	38 (in 6 groups)	Not used	10	✓
EU workers	1000?	2	12	1	✓
Chinese	210	22	2	1	✓
Bangladeshis	37	1	2	1	✓
Pakistanis	46	2	5	Not available	✓
Indians	168	4	9		✓
Asian white mixed	260	2	0		✓
Asian other (incl SE Asian)	300	0	5		✓
Black people (incl mixed)	445	5	7		✓
All others	100	3	6		✓

The following graph indicates length of residence in the County of the questionnaire respondents.



## Introduction: Diversity in Herefordshire

As regards 'race' and ethnicity Herefordshire is not a microcosm of the UK as a whole. This is obviously so in the case of numbers but less obviously so in the composition of the minorities that are present in the County, and the reasons for their presence.

Drawn from a variety of sources (see page 5) we would estimate these figures for 2003:

Temporary workers	Eastern European	3000
Temporary workers	Portugal	100
Other white minorities	Irish	800
	All others (Welsh, French, USA, etc)	2000
	Jewish (all also counted as white)	130
Travellers	Irish Travellers (some counted above)	100
	Romany Travellers	750
South Asian	Indian	168
	Pakistani	46
	Bangladeshi	37
	Asian 'other'	84
	Mixed white/Asian	260
Chinese	Chinese	210
'Other' ethnic groups	S E Asian, Middle Eastern etc	163
Black	Caribbean	65
	African	88
	Mixed white/African	80
	Mixed white/Caribbean	195
	Other black	17

The groupings in this table reflect a number of assumptions. In common parlance 'minority ethnic' is widely recognised as shorthand (or a euphemism) for people who are distinguishable by skin colour: those in the table described as Asian, South East Asian, of Middle Eastern origin and Black. The total number within these groups is about 1400 people, or rather less than one per cent.

It is increasingly recognised, however, that this shorthand obscures aspects of cultural identity and experiences of discrimination that are not simply tied to colour, nor do they reflect the legal situation. Romany Travellers constitute an ethnic group under the Race Relations Acts, as do Jews; the presence of both groups in the County presents opportunities and challenges to agencies' provision.

Having said this, and noting that it is very obvious from the table that the County's largest minorities are white, we have concentrated *mainly* on groups who from much evidence elsewhere may be expected to have specific issues of culture or discrimination which merit our attention. It is also true that while accessing *all* of our target research population has been difficult, there were even fewer ways open to us as researchers to access the 700 Irish people who categorised themselves in the Census as ethnically not British. The same applies to the 2000 white 'non British', but to a lesser extent since some were seasonal workers.

We would also want to underline another aspect of the shorthand about being British. The Census is careful to often include the term (e.g. 'Asian or Asian *British* Bangladeshi') and our omission of it in some tables and charts is simply for brevity. Based on national patterns of settlement, schools data and questionnaire returns it is reasonable to assume that the majority in most of the categories above are British citizens – the obvious exceptions being the seasonal workers and the Irish Travellers. It may be the case that the majority of the 90 or so Africans do not have British citizenship, but it is impossible to say without knowing which of the many countries in Africa they originate from.

The Census shows about 2300 people born outside the UK but within the EU and 3400 outside it. Just over half of the latter are 'white British' (some likely to have had armed forces or Commonwealth connections of some kind) and a further quarter are 'non-British white'. Put another way, of the 5700 Herefordshire residents born outside the UK, less than 700 are non-white.

## Religion

The following table *combines* what the Census reveals about religious allegiances in the County, together with some wider research evidence and a few details gathered during the course of this research to summarise what is known about local ethnic minorities and religion.

Eastern European migrant workers	3000	Mainly Catholic, some Orthodox, observance not widespread
Portuguese migrant workers	100	Catholic background
Irish	700	Catholic background
All others (Welsh, French, mixed etc)	2000	Very varied but mainly Christian
Jews	130	About 50 practising
Irish Travellers (some counted above)	100	Almost all Catholic
Romany Travellers	750	Christian, but very varied observance
Indians	168	Slightly more Hindu than Sikh
Pakistanis	46	Almost all Muslim (but see below)
Bangladeshis	37	Almost all Muslim (but see below)
Asian 'other'	84	About a third Christian, rest Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist
Mixed white/Asian	260	Christian or 'no religion'
Chinese	210	Probably evenly split between Buddhist, Christian and no religion
'Other' ethnic groups	163	About half are Christian, the rest very mixed
Caribbean	65	Christian or no religion
African	88	Mainly Christian
Mixed white/African	80	Mainly Christian
Mixed white/Caribbean	195	Christian or no religion
Other black	17	Christian or no religion

The 347 Buddhists counted in the Census comprise around one third of the Chinese group, together with some Sri Lankans, Thais, and Nepalese. The rest are white.

Apparently precise Census data is sometimes misleading. The following table is extracted from one available from the ONS and contributes to the table above, but needs some commentary. The cells to which we want to draw attention are boxed and shaded.

Table S104 ETHNIC GROUP BY RELIGION

Table population : All people

Geographical level: Herefordshire

	ALL PEOPLE	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	No religion	Not stated
<b>ALL PEOPLE</b>	<b>174,866</b>	<b>138,165</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>21,950</b>	<b>13,491</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>173,291</b>	<b>137,444</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21,641</b>	<b>13,287</b>
British	170,566	135,501	241	18	43	17	21,201	13,027
Irish	785	639	10	-	-	-	68	65
Other White	1,940	1,304	12	-	22	-	372	195
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>88</b>
White & Black Caribbean	195	120	-	-	-	-	49	26
White & Black African	83	54	-	-	5	-	17	4
White and Asian	262	140	5	3	13	-	61	37
Other Mixed	157	79	-	-	9	-	43	21
<b>Asian</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>
Indian	167	18	3	67	6	44	13	16
Pakistani	47	9	-	-	21	-	3	11
Bangladeshi	38	6	-	-	24	-	3	5
Other Asian	84	30	12	12	14	-	8	5
<b>Black or Black British</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>
Black Caribbean	64	49	-	-	-	-	9	6
Black African	83	67	-	-	-	-	-	16
Other Black	18	12	-	-	-	-	3	3
<b>Chinese or Other Ethnic Group</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>
Chinese	212	49	34	-	3	-	84	39
Other Ethnic Group	165	88	30	3	13	-	16	15

Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data.

2001 Census © Crown Copyright

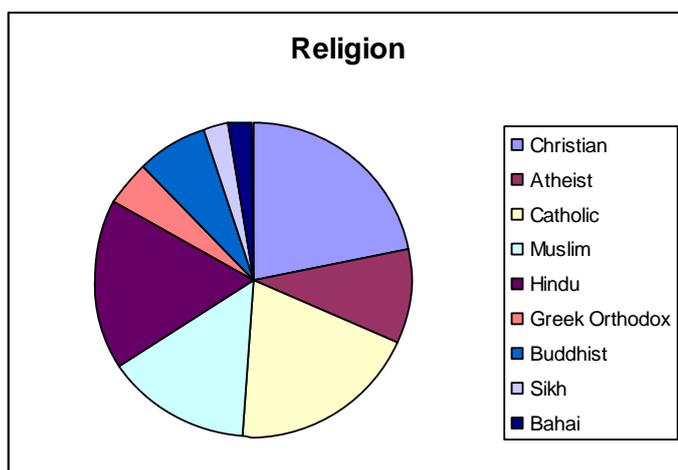
To take the Christian column first, in our judgement the figure of 9 Pakistani Christians (out of 47 in all) and six Bangladeshi Christians (out of 38) is so untypical nationally that it has to be questioned. The most thorough recent survey of minority ethnic people in the UK was the Policy Studies Institute's *Ethnic Minorities in Britain* (1997) by Tariq Modood and others. This indicates 0% of Pakistanis identifying themselves as Christian and just 1% of Bangladeshis, and these very low figures are confirmed in the Census data for England and Wales (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D6891.xls>). Our suggestion would be that in each case these numbers are made up by one family, and that to base any policy on the assumption that this is typical of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in general would be to take the Census data too uncritically.

Similar observations do *not* apply to the numbers of Hindus and Buddhists listed as white, since both these faiths actively proselytise in the UK with some success.

The numbers of white Muslims is much more intriguing. The Census lists 173 Muslims, of which half are apparently white. Islam does proselytise amongst white people but not to the extent that would produce proportions like this. Modood et al argue that their numbers are insignificant nationally (1997: 298); the Census for England and Wales shows 0.38% of white people are Muslims, of which the majority are 'white other' - in this context generally taken to mean Turkish.

The last misleading data from the Census tables concerns Sikhs, of which apparently 17 out of 61 in the county are white. The Census identifies 0.1% of English and Welsh whites as Sikhs and there are small percentages from some other ethnic groups. In practice, however, virtually all Sikhs have a heritage in the Punjab region of the sub-continent (even if born in the UK, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, East Africa, or other places to which their families may have migrated). A very small number of white people who marry Sikhs convert, but it is highly unlikely that such a high percentage in Herefordshire fit this description. We would argue that the figure of 17 is not to be taken at face value; it may be people of Indian descent strategically identifying themselves as white, it may be children of mixed heritage identifying themselves as white.

The distribution of religious allegiance in the 46 questionnaires we had returned (see research approach) was as follows. 'Catholic' and 'Greek Orthodox' are distinguished from 'Christian' because that is what respondents themselves said.



## Communities

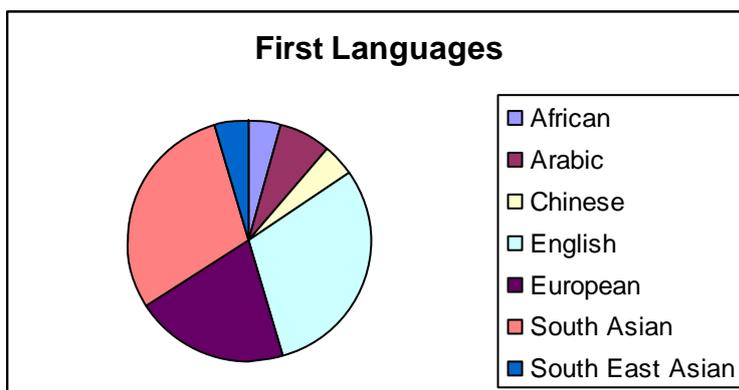
The numbers above indicate that it is unwise to speak loosely of minority ethnic 'communities' in the County. We return to this point at times, but since the word implies at least some practical connection as well as a consciousness of belonging, we would suggest the only groups to whom the term could reasonably be applied are the three different kinds of Travellers and the Jews. The other groups are so small and so disparate that they are better thought of as individuals with different ethnicities rather than groups as such, and certainly not communities.

We do not have a clear overall account of people's presence in the county or their place in the economy, though some indications are given in separate sections below. The largest employers in the area who would recruit nationally for senior posts are in the public sector – the Council, the five post-16 colleges<sup>1</sup>, and the NHS. The hospital employs about 80 minority ethnic staff, the colleges no more than six between them and the Council 29 (out of 5,600).

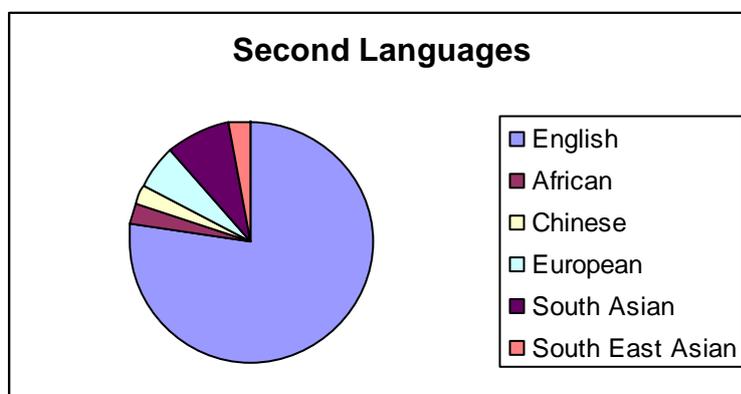
Apart from the hospital, the largest group of minority people in one place is probably at the Royal National College for the Blind (RNCB) which, since it recruits students nationwide has about 10% from minority ethnic groups (about 24 people).

## Language

One feature of community is shared language. Questionnaire returns and interview contacts indicated the spread of languages one would expect from the Census data (they are grouped geographically here to simplify the graph):



From what we found and from reasoning from circumstances elsewhere we would conclude that there is only one group of any size either routinely functioning in a language other than English or excluded because of lack of English – most of those in the graph below speak English as their second language. The group that may be the exception to this comprises temporary workers from Portugal at a local poultry producer. This is not to diminish the effect upon others who *are* excluded or the need to support them, but it is to say that there are not several specific groups that need targeting. The FE College has just two EFL courses, one intermediate and one advanced. Having said this, it was clear that Bangladeshis and Chinese people were more comfortable communicating with the researchers in Cantonese/Mandarin and Bengali and a handful of questionnaire returns indicated English as a third language.



We were also told that Romany continues to be widely spoken in the County though not usually in the hearing of non-Romanies, and that not being fluent in English seemed to evoke negative reactions and assumptions of stupidity from some. One questionnaire returned from someone of South American background argued that lack of fluency in English led to overtly or subtly insulting treatment on more than one occasion.

The agricultural seasonal workers need to be considered separately here, since although they are not fluent English speakers their contact with and needs from local provision are not the same as permanent residents. This is discussed further in the section that deals specifically with them, and we do suggest the provision for them of English tuition.

The following table summarises the spoken languages we identified in the County, generally in combination with English:

<i>Group</i>	<i>Roots/origin</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>First language</i>	<i>Functional English?</i>
Temporary agricultural workers	Eastern European	3000	Great variety	Variable, Russian main common language
Temporary industrial workers	Portugal, Slovakia, Poland	150	Portuguese, Slovak, Polish	Not usually
Other white minorities	Irish	700	English	
	All others (Welsh, French, USA, mixed)	2000	English and several EU languages	Majority effective in English even if second language
	Jewish	130	English	
Travellers	Irish Travellers (some counted above)	100	English	
	Romany Travellers	750	English	
South Asian	Indian	168	Punjabi, Hindi, Gujerati, Malayalam, Tamil, Telegu	Yes
	Pakistani	46	Urdu, Punjabi, Pushto	Yes
	Bangladeshi	37	Bengali	Usually
	Asian 'other'	84	Burmese, Nepali, Sinhalese	No clear data
	Mixed white/Asian	260	English	
Mainly South East Asian	Chinese	210	Cantonese, Mandarin	Very varied
	Non-Chinese 'other'	163	Arabic, Malay, Thai	No clear data
Black	Caribbean	65	English	
	African	88	Ndebele, Yoruba, Shona, Afrikaans, and others	Usually
	Mixed white/African	80	English	
	Mixed white/Caribbean	195	English	
	Other black	17	No clear data	No clear data

**People of South Asian descent**

Usually described generically as ‘Asians’, Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis combined make up 3.6% of the total UK population, thus making them in national terms the largest ‘ethnic group’ comprising not far off half of the UK’s visible minorities. It is questionable to put together these three groups which are in reality quite distinct, with different (though very related) languages and variations in religion and culture, and indeed it only tends to be research done in the past that treats ‘Asians’ as anything like a homogenous group. We are doing so here for introductory purposes. Bearing in mind that many non-specialists will regard ‘Asians’ as homogenous, our purpose is to make some key distinctions within the Herefordshire population, insofar as that is possible. (In geographical terms Chinese people are of course ‘Asian’, but the convention in British research is to discuss them separately.)

Our guess is that some people of Sri Lankan, Thai, Vietnamese, Burmese and Malaysian descent will have described themselves as ‘Asian/Asian British other’ and are thus within the 84 counted in this (very disparate) group, though some of these may have placed themselves in yet another category, namely non-Chinese ‘other ethnic group’ (who number 166).

These numbers indicate that the South Asian population of the county has very different characteristics when compared to the UK as a whole. Of a total visible minority ethnic population of just under 1600 they are certainly not the largest group, with the usual ‘big three’ making up only 251 people and even if all those describing themselves as ‘other Asian’ and ‘mixed white/Asian’ are included the total is only 511, with another ten at the RNCB. Nationally Indians are the largest group and Bangladeshis the smallest, which is indeed the case in the County.

National data on the percentage of people who classified themselves as ‘mixed white/Asian’ are not yet available for comparison, but we know from the 1997 PSI study (Modood et al, 1997) that this group is not large nationally, so the Herefordshire population of 260 –the largest permanent minority group distinguishable by colour in the County - is not typical of the UK as a whole. School figures show 57 children in this group, making them (again very untypically) the largest visible minority in schools and also suggesting that it is a relatively young group of people. The County’s post 16 education colleges have 23 mixed white/Asian students.

**South Asians in full time education (plus 10 at RNCB)<sup>2</sup>**

South Asians	Indians	15
	Pakistanis	0
	Bangladeshis	3
	Asian/Asian British ‘other’	8
	mixed white/Asian	62

**People of mixed descent**

The County’s ethnic minorities comprise more people who describe themselves as ‘mixed’ than is true of the population as a whole. Apart from the nationally unusual group of mixed Asian/white people there are about a further 400 people classified themselves this way in the Census, including about 250 mixed Black/white. These people of ‘mixed ethnicity’ may include some white people of mixed European backgrounds, but the wording of the Census question makes this unlikely. The schools’ PLASC returns and data from the FE sector demonstrate this mixture is present in schools at least as much as children with roots in one minority ethnic group.

**People of mixed backgrounds in full time education (plus four at RNCB)**

White/Asian mixed	82
White/Caribbean mixed	42
White/African mixed	22
Other group/Black mixed	3
Other mixed	67

This has implications for cultural provision. A significant group of Sikhs in the County might require some thought about a gurudwara, vegetarian food in hospitals and welfare provision, and consideration of potential exclusion through language. People of mixed descent, however, are unlikely to be unified by language, religion or culture, underlining the point we have already made warning against any assumption of minority ethnic ‘communities’. Such a varied population will not have predictable or easily quantifiable particular needs.

## **Black people**

Although this term is disputed and has shifted in meaning over the years, we are using it here to refer to people with ancestry, however distant, in Africa. This therefore includes those who were actually African born, those born in the Caribbean and British born people of Caribbean, African and related mixed heritage. This is not, therefore, what we would call a ‘specific ethnicity’ in the same way as Pakistanis, since there are likely to be great variations amongst Black people with regard to roots, language religion and culture. The Census recorded about 450 people in this very disparate group who described themselves as Black.

**Black people in the County (plus 8 at RNCB)**

<i>Self classification (Black +...)</i>	<i>Census</i>	<i>Full time education</i>
Caribbean	65	3
African	88	19
Mixed white/African	80	22
Mixed white/Caribbean	195	42
Other black	17	8

## Footnotes

1. The Further Education College, the College of Art and Design, the 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, the Royal National College for the Blind, and Holme Lacy College.
2. The RNCB students are not included in the tables of specific groups’ numbers in education since in some cases this would virtually identify individuals.

## Identifiable communities: *Jews*

According to the 2001 Census the Jewish population of Hereford is numbered at 130, although the organiser of the Jewish community puts the number of known members at 50. The word 'community' is used deliberately here, since this group of 50 is indeed that, with a fairly active network and regular monthly meetings held in a Catholic church hall. They provided material for an exhibition in the library accompanying the Cathedral's Anne Frank Exhibition, featuring Jews in the county. Their presence in the county is explained by many individual factors rather than any single process. Some seem to have retired to the area because of its rural and peaceful attractions, some have come because of work, some are self-employed and saw opportunities in the area.

The chair of the community group ('The Council') described its members as very mixed and individual, with no clear patterns in terms of employment or background, though it is thought none could be described as 'badly off' and few if any work in manual occupations. Several originate in cities with significant Jewish populations, particularly London, and there is at least one Holocaust survivor. The ages of those attending meetings vary from 12 to 90, though these are the ends of a spectrum in which most people are nearer the middle. Many if not most are married to non-Jews, most are not religiously practising, and none are Orthodox (though one Orthodox couple fairly recently moved away). A member in one town does wear the *kipot* (skull cap), probably the only Jew in the county to visibly declare his faith in public. The group's meetings have a religious core to them, but the group functions at least as much as for social purposes and in some sense to affirm identity and heritage, however loosely. As well as religious services there is a 'rites and practices group', which actively discusses Jewish practices. The planned Passover supper for 2004 was expecting an attendance of 30. A retired rabbi lived in Ross until his death in 2000, so services are now led by one of the group.

The chair of the group is an active member of the LEA's Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) on which a Christian, a Muslim and a Ba'hai also sit. He is used quite extensively as a resource for schools and provided backup educational sessions around the Anne Frank exhibition. He finds the LEA - particularly the key adviser with whom he has contact - supportive and positive about diversity in the county and willing and committed to widening school children's knowledge of Judaism.

Although the phone contact number for the group is a permanent answering machine to prevent any harassment, this is a preventative measure rather than reacting to anything that has happened. There is some slight feeling that Jews have to be careful in this respect, and indeed some feeling that when locals realise for the first time that they are Jewish there is some surprise at their 'normality': people presumably never having knowingly met and talked with a Jew before. This was described fairly lightly rather than as being offensive. It is the case that even if there were any groups interested in singling out the Jews for harassment (as has happened elsewhere) there are no obvious targets. There is no synagogue, the monthly meetings happen in various venues (sometimes in people's homes) and most regularly in a Catholic church hall in Hereford, but this would be unknown to the general public. There is a small section of the cemetery in Hereford set aside for Jewish burial and is still used, but again this is so little known and the section itself far from obvious that it does not provide a visible target.

Given the difficulty of practising as an Orthodox Jew in the locality it was felt very unlikely that any would willingly move there. This is not so much an issue for the provision of public services as to do with the personal practicalities of keeping to dietary laws without a ready supply of Kosher meat. It was not felt that provision of a Kosher diet in hospitals or care homes would be an issue since few of the known Jews in the group practised any more strictly than avoiding pork, which would create few problems for institutional caterers. The Chair knew of one older Jewish person in sheltered accommodation who was 'careful' with her diet, but it was not thought to be a problem for her.

The overall picture therefore is of a group who are conscious of themselves as distinctive but who do not feel any marginalisation or exclusion from the majority. Contact through faith groups is well developed and the chair of the Council is well known to relevant staff in the Council. There are clear instances of strong support: the provision of the Catholic church hall (free of charge), the commitment to education including the Anne Frank Exhibition and the associated library display.

## Identifiable communities: *Travellers*

The **sources** of information for this section are as follows:

- Two days spent travelling with the Health Bus, talking with the workers and meeting some users of the service;
- Interviews with the Rural Media Co. who publish *Traveller Times*;
- An interview with a County Traveller Education Advisory Teacher;
- An interview with the co-ordinator of the Traveller Support Group;
- Interviews with two Council officials concerned with Traveller issues;
- Reading the draft detailed evaluation of the Health Bus scheme produced by the centre for Urban and Regional Studies of Birmingham University;
- Analysis of the Council's Traveller Policy
- Interviews with 13 Travellers from the three major groups present in the County:

<i>Living in</i>	<i>Romany</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>New</i>
Housing	13		
Official site		4	
Private site			2

### Population size

Travellers have been part of the county's population for centuries, the first record being in the 1530s, largely because of the agricultural base of the economy and the seasonal nature of much farming work.

It is notoriously difficult to be confident about Traveller numbers partly because of methods of counting and partly because of definition. No question about Traveller status was asked in the 2001 Census and it is widely recognised that the biannual DETR/DTLR Count carried out by local authorities on behalf of central government is inaccurate for three main reasons (Green, 1991; Kenrick and Clark, 1999; Drakakis-Smith and Mason, 2001):

- it estimates the number of caravans rather than the number of people;
- it excludes those Travellers living in houses;
- it excludes those living on temporary sites

In any case, a very sensitive methodology would have to be employed since there is a widespread unwillingness to self-identify as a Traveller because of the historical stigma of being a 'gypsy'.

The problem of definition lies in official categories as well as people's ideas of themselves. In race relations law, a person with a Travelling heritage still counts as a member of a minority ethnic group even though they may have been settled for more than a generation, whereas a 'New' Traveller without such a heritage, even if living a nomadic lifestyle, is not regarded the same way. Under planning law, the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960) covers 'persons of nomadic habit of life regardless of racial origin' and one legal judgement defines Gypsies as those who travel with an economic purpose.

In the late 1990s while arguing the case for a travelling health facility for Travellers in the county a population of 8000 people was claimed, but this now seems to be widely acknowledged as a substantial over-estimate. Both a recent evaluation of this health bus scheme and the longest serving local worker involved with Travellers put the population at 1000 and no other sources disagreed with this. LEA records in March 2004 show 160 children of Traveller background in county schools (though this is almost certainly an underestimate due to the unwillingness to self-identify referred to above).

Of the estimated population of 1000 perhaps 750 are 'traditional' English Travellers, or Romanies. 'New' Travellers (not an ethnic group) comprise the next largest sub-group, with Irish Travellers being the smallest. A very small group of 'barrel top' Travellers who travel between commons during the milder months were mentioned to us, these are invariably New Travellers. At around 750 in number therefore, the Traditional Travellers/Romanies are Herefordshire's largest minority ethnic group.

## Housing and Traveller sites

The evidence suggests that the overall pattern of Traveller life in Herefordshire is either more residentially settled than formerly or essentially in transit through the county. Perhaps three quarters of the Romanies are permanently housed i.e. about 550 people. This is higher than the proportion nationally who are thought to be settled, put at around 50% (Morris and Clements, 1999; Kenrick and Clark, 1999). The New Travellers do not quite accord with this pattern in that many permanently reside in the county but travel to some extent within it, or to just outside its borders and some travel further afield (even abroad) where some find employment. On the other hand, a number are fairly permanently settled at the Luston site, partly for the stability of their children's schooling. The Irish Travellers are mostly passing through the county (albeit for long periods) though a small degree of permanent settling is beginning with at least one family in a house. There are also fairground winter parking grounds in Ross and one at Holme Lacy.

It was suggested to us that the neighbouring county of Shropshire provided sites under the 1968 Act before Herefordshire, with some hint that this was a cynical move to see if County provision could be avoided (though this would date back to pre-1997 when the County did not have unitary authority status). We were told it was only when a judicial review found the county in breach of its statutory duties that provision was begun. Some local Travellers obtained plots in Shropshire and moved back into Herefordshire when sites were eventually provided. In 2004 there were seven official sites in Herefordshire, (all located well away from houses) on which Travellers are licensees only of their plots, thus not having tenants' rights:

Luston (Croft Lane)	occupied solely by New Travellers; 10 pitches, each with its own brick built facility containing bathroom and toilet.
Madley	mothballed and for emergency transit use only – facilities not good and next to an industrial site. 17 pitches
Bromyard (Openfields)	badly vandalised; subject (with Grafton) to unsuccessful bid for refurbishment. 14 pitches, three of which legally occupied by Romanies in May 2004 and one without permission.
Grafton (Romany Close)	mothballed and badly vandalised. 18 pitches, subject to (failed) bid to Office Deputy Prime Minister to restore with fewer, better pitches
Bosbury (Tinkers Corner)	brick built facilities with utility rooms. 7 pitches, occupied by Romanies
Watery Lane (Hereford)	similar facilities to Bosbury. 11 pitches, occupied by Romanies
Pembridge (Turnpike)	occupied solely by one extended family of Irish Travellers, 6 pitches, each with its own brick built facility containing bathroom and toilet. Beside an industrial estate.

This gives a theoretical total of 83 pitches, though in practice (in May 2004) the number of residential pitches is 48, with no transit places.

There are some 'unofficial' stopping places, some of them on a handful of farms that have provided stopping space for many years while the Travellers are working there, but it is thought that the farmers involved are very unwilling to consider these becoming permanent encampments. Such arrangements are inevitably insecure for the Travellers.

We were told a harrowing story by one Romany family who had lived more or less permanently for 45 years on one farm but who had to leave after becoming unable to work (though we were not able to gather others' versions of these events). Management changes at the farm have subsequently led to other Travellers seeking permanent housing elsewhere.

There are (in May 2004) seven private sites with recently acquired legal permission to act as such, with cases recently agreed for two more. One of these legal cases – a privately owned site occupied by New Travellers provided by the farmer who owns the land - has been going on for up to 12 years 'so long overdue it appears to be making a mockery of the planning process...'. It has very basic facilities with water available from standpipes and one eco-composting toilet although at least one resident has been there several years. In this case the farmer lets out the land to make extra income as a result of a downturn in other means of making a living, and the Council is seeking to close the site. A senior officer described the conditions that some of the Travellers are living in as 'terrible': basically muddy fields with no facilities, adding that especially for older people this can be very hard. The same officer argued there was a desperate need for a transit site. There is a clause in the Council's Traveller policy that states: 'The Council will not secure evictions from private land' though this is conditional upon the number and spacing of caravans.

All the official sites are currently administered by the Council, though there have been some approaches by the Gypsy Council nationally to run and provide them, possibly starting with a transit site.

Anyone actually travelling in the County is therefore subject to the law prohibiting roadside encampments and liable to have notice served upon them to move on. These illegal stops occur on average once every two weeks on County roadsides or car parks, about 15 each year resulting in a court order (which we were told 'were not generally enforced' because the people moved on before the enforcement deadline).

The pattern of site use and change is complex and subject to competing accounts and explanations. While there are in theory seven official sites where Travellers may camp, in practice two of these are closed and because of relationships within and between different types of Travellers some sites are in effect designated for one of the three main groups. Coming later than the provision in neighbouring counties the Luston site was apparently built with the intention of housing some Romanies and did so for about three years. In practice it became a New Traveller site, as was the site at Romany Close, formerly a mixed site of fixed and transit trailers, now closed because of damage done to the facilities.

We were told that Romanies also left the Pembridge (Turnpike) site, giving way to Irish Travellers for whom it is in effect home, though they still travel using it as a base.

Certainly fewer Romanies than formerly occupy any of the established sites. It was suggested to us that many Romanies who were long-term residents of Herefordshire moved into houses because they felt 'pushed out' of the sites, either by Irish Travellers or in some cases where one Romany family dominated numerically it became unattractive for other families. Other Romanies said the brick built facilities were minimal and took no account of Romany Traveller sensibilities about hygiene, siting toilets next to cooking facilities and provision generally being rather worse than they had encountered elsewhere (for instance in Shropshire). It seems something as basic as the need for more than one trailer per family – because of family size and different functions for different trailers - was little appreciated by some officials, and none had a children's play area inaccessible to horses or reversing lorries. The pitches are also rather too small for the number of people and vehicles involved – any couple likely to have two, one of them quite large.

Two couples we interviewed gave a slightly different account, being now of retirement age they were glad to be occupying housing association accommodation and seemed to have no nostalgia for damp and cold trailers in wintertime. Relatives and other Romanies were settled in houses in the same area, possibly now partaking of a life-style that would have been completely unavailable to them in the past but one which might have been acceptable to them. How much a 'push-and-pull' effect is involved here (in that good clean sites are hard to find) is impossible to say. Both couples commented upon the presence of a 'pecking order' on any site and the consequent jockeying for position and struggle for leadership – not something they ever relished. Another couple had mixed feelings about being settled, not especially disliking it but nevertheless feeling forced into it. One woman said that if conflicts between Traveller groups were adequately contained she would move from her house back to living in a trailer.

Another source identified this as predominantly an issue of effective site management, pointing out that this had been progressively reduced. The Luston site, we were informed, had a part-time warden for a decade with a good take-up of plots and good relationships between neighbours.

Becoming settled in a house was a difficult process for the farm worker referred to earlier. They were initially found a house in a local village but their neighbours took exception to the fact that they were a Traveller family and began a campaign against them. Many of the other villagers were turned against them, with a petition being organised by one of the non-teaching staff at their son's school to try to get the family moved elsewhere. Some local children made their son's life difficult to the extent that it became impossible for him to go out of the house to play because of the local hostility towards the family. By now increasingly desperate with both parents' health being affected, it was in the end the Health Bus staff who helped them find somewhere else to live (where they are now well settled with supportive neighbours).

The housing allocation scheme *Home Point* allocates people in need of housing to priority bands on the basis of circumstances and acts as a partnering agreement between several housing associations. One New Traveller we spoke to is (she hopes) on the point of being re-housed having reached the maximum points for allocation. She is seeking settled housing for her school age daughter's sake, expecting to possibly take up travelling again when her daughter has finished school.

Various forces and pressures have led to a considerable proportion of former travelling people becoming settled. Some clearly prefer it and said so to us. There is also the influence of the Council's implicit and explicit policy about sites and stopping places, perhaps 170 of the latter having been blocked in the past 25 years. It was suggested to us more than once that for years there has been a more or less explicit policy wishing to see all Travellers settled and thus inevitably more 'socially accountable' by councils and police alike. The fact that at one time a local Romany took the Council to the High Court for its failure to provide sites under the 1968 Act suggests a history of relative marginalisation.

This policy may be manifest in what has happened to the sites. It is hardly the role of this research to discover the origins of the vandalism and damage to some sites, but the implication seems to be it was committed by elements of the Traveller population based elsewhere not locally. Be that as it may, there is considerable feeling amongst some of those most closely involved that there is a long-term problem of minimal support and an unwillingness to creatively liaise with other agencies. Counties in other parts of the UK have more permanent wardens and liaison officers and hence more effective management of potential conflicts between groups, gaining entry to sites, liaison between agencies, the balance between transit and long-term pitches and the provision and maintenance of facilities.

A report commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister commented on the overall national background to Traveller settlement

For Gypsies/Travellers, the 'problem' of unauthorised camping is the constant threat of eviction and disruption of everyday life. For local councils the 'problem' is one of dealing with a very visible and contentious local issue where public expectations on speed of removal are unrealistic. Unauthorised encampments lead to complaints of increased crime, noise, vehicle and property damage, rubbish and obstruction of rights of way or recreational land. Complaints are not always substantiated.

Dealing with unauthorised camping is just one element within the wider context of Gypsy/Traveller issues. These include policies on planning and site provision and site protection.

The 1994 Act repealed those parts of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which placed a duty on local authorities to provide Gypsy sites. Authorities retain a discretionary power to make provision. Circular DoE 1/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning made clear the expectation that Gypsies should now be encouraged and supported in providing their own sites. The case studies suggested, however, that criteria-based policies in Local Plans made such provision extremely difficult, especially in areas of planning restraint.

Public Gypsy site provision varied between the case study authorities. Only one county had a programme of further development, while another had embarked on a major reinvestment programme. Elsewhere, conditions and facilities were reported to be deteriorating. Most sites were permanent sites where families lived throughout most of the year. There were very few formal transit sites, although need for such provision was widely acknowledged. There are serious problems in developing and managing transit sites. A minority of case study authorities had attempted to identify less formal 'stopping places' for Gypsies/Travellers, but nothing approaching a national network currently exists. Site protection - that is, undertaking works to prevent access to avoid unauthorised stopping - was important, especially in some of the urban areas. Site protection was not always effective. In the absence of any planned provision, site protection may simply drive Gypsies/Travellers elsewhere.

It should be noted that the successful planning applications for small family sites, soon to number eight, puts the county ahead of others in this aspect of provision.

### **County and other provision and support in general**

At one time (before sole authority status) one department within the Council managed sites and another dealt with roadside issues. This was later reorganised so all responsibility was within one department (Client Services) though it was suggested to us that this was not entirely welcomed by that department. A degree of in-fighting within the Council was described to us, the responsibility being seen as a 'poison chalice' and it being suggested that 'a constructive stance has never really been taken since county reorganisation'.

Managed by the Head of Client Services, the Council employs a Gypsy Officer and a Gypsy Sites Officer – the responsibility of the former being to manage the sites and to monitor illegal encampments. The appointment of a liaison officer was planned and budgeted for (through the 'Supported Peoples' initiative) but in May 2004 had still not been made. (There may be a practical difficulty with this appointment even when someone is in post, since Travellers having been designated as a disadvantaged group any funding would provide support for *individuals* from that group, rather than the group itself.) There are two full time education staff who work as advisory teachers specialising in supporting Traveller children and this Traveller Education Service (TES) is the longest established provision in the county (it is now managed and organised as part of the West Midlands Consortium for Travelling Children - WMESTC – see below). Sure Start is also involved in play facilities/schemes for young Traveller children.

The voluntary Traveller Support Group, in action since 1977, is active in supporting Travellers of all kinds, helping them with paperwork, dealing with problems with hostile neighbours when they are housed, working with them in planning applications, establishing the play scheme, promoting health needs, advocating and liaising on their behalf with the Council and other agencies, and pursuing legal cases. They felt they had good co-operative relations with agencies on the whole, but more so in the past, especially with senior Council officers.

A Traveller Liaison Group functioned at one time, consisting of: Traveller Education, Council site management and operations staff, the Traveller Support Group, some New Travellers, and Sure Start. We were told this is now defunct, though in practice contains many of the same people as the Health Bus Project's steering group meetings.

In 2002 a group was convened at County level to produce a Traveller policy, on the initiative of a councillor. This comprised Council staff employed to work with Travellers, staff from the Traveller Education Service, the Traveller Support Group, the police, the NHS, and the planning and environmental health departments of the council. We have already commented on the County's provision of Traveller sites and their management. We have formed the impression that while a policy was 'hammered out' it was soon superseded in practice, and although there has been no promised annual review we were informed that some alterations have taken place without consultation. Its vision of aiming

To create in Herefordshire an environment where different communities, the traditionally nomadic and the traditionally settled, live in harmony and where all have access to the basic needs and benefits which characterise an inclusive society

could not fairly be said to have been met and its statement that

It would seem that the current site provision is neither being used effectively nor meeting the needs of travellers. The Council believes that changes should be made to the current arrangements for site ownership, provision and management. These changes should assist in both streamlining the service and providing sites that meet residents' needs and aspirations.

Has not been acted upon in a way that has led to any obvious changes.

In practice it is now a minority of Travellers who live on sites, either official or private, and there is some feeling that the Council likes it that way. Conflict that has arisen between Traveller groups was partly put down by some sources to poor site management and inadequate provision, the issue of mobile Irish Travellers described by one source as 'bungled' by the Council and only being resolved by a firm and constructive intervention by the police (who were described to us as being considerably more sensitive and constructive in relation to Irish Travellers than the Council, with some 'excellent' officers as opposed to some Council officers at various levels who had 'an attitude problem' towards Travellers). Negative individual attitudes are given some license if Council policy amounts to inadequate statutory provision and the inevitable illegal off-road stopping.

As we suggested under site provision and housing, it would be possible substantially to improve the existing sites and to manage them more effectively, thus having a policy that responds to Traveller wishes and potentially pre-empts conflicts. The Traveller Support Group argues that many if not most of the Romanies would settle on their own small plots if they were able to buy them and obtain planning permission. As we have said, some exist already, with a good record of maintenance and harmonious relationships with non-Traveller neighbours.

A settled Romany woman spoke of quite good support from the providers of her first social housing when she experienced harassment from neighbours because of her background. She moved, and described the housing provider as 'supportive and much better than in the past.'

One of the advisory teachers mentioned above has worked for the service for 20 years. Training on the basis of this and accumulated WMCESTC experience is periodically delivered to newly qualified teachers, student teachers, parent groups, health workers, education managers, school governors, support assistants in schools and Sure Start staff. Training to raise staff awareness has more recently been sought by the Fire Brigade, which is also concerned to include Travellers in their fire prevention education programme. Social services do not avail themselves of this training and neither do the police (though some police training provided by a Romany woman was just beginning at the time of the research). It was suggested to us that there is some nervousness and uncertainty around child protection cases.

## **Education and youth**

### *Background*

Although often settled, there remains a family heritage of Travelling as many families keep a trailer and may well go on the road for a short time in the summer months (and this may interfere with children's school attendance). Nevertheless, there are far fewer problems with the effective education of settled Traveller children than has historically been the case when more were mobile, roadside encampments were more common, schools were reluctant to take in temporary and stigmatised pupils, and more parents were illiterate.

Most schools in the north and east of the county will have had some experience with Traveller children, though there are clusters with more experience and, of course, where Travellers have settled permanently local schools will have larger numbers. (Agriculture having had a different historical pattern in the south of the county fewer Romanies have worked there in the hop harvest and schools will have had correspondingly less contact.)

The Irish Travellers have a strong preference for Catholic schools and tend to use particular ones, although since there are only three Catholic primary schools and one secondary Catholic school the amount of travel involved has led a family in the north of the county to use an Anglican school. Compared to the Traditional Romany Travellers, more of the Irish Traveller parents are not literate. One professional felt that Irish Travellers had 'a deep suspicion' of education, though at the time of the research there were only three Irish Traveller children of school age in the County (two of them in school).

There is a general pattern of withdrawal from sex education lessons amongst both the Irish Travellers and the larger number of settled Romany families. This is a pattern observed in other parts of the country and is rooted in deep suspicion of 'modern' or 'liberal' sexual mores. The health workers with whom we spoke told of the extreme sensitivity and confidentiality with which pregnancy is treated, a woman being unlikely to talk about it with female members of the group, let alone with males in whose presence any mention of the topic is considered completely taboo.

### *Provision*

The Traveller Education Service currently supports many of the 160 Traveller children in schools, some in travelling families and some settled. As mentioned above, it is part of the WMESTC, a consortium established in 1973 and joined by Hereford and Worcester in 1980 well in advance of provision elsewhere. As well as the two advisory teachers the consortium has others available according to need and provides a welfare officer and some additional financial support for Traveller pupils. It has detailed data on a school-by-school basis, including the specific background of pupils, how they are housed and their degree of mobility.

When the TES was established many Travellers did not go to school at all with almost none staying as long as secondary school. Many who are parents today were first supported by the TES when they were children and the Romany community has been settled long enough for most parents to be literate although grandparents probably were not. We were told there is generally a positive attitude towards schooling for the sake of the children's future, with less suspicion of the authorities than in former times.

The TES currently offers a range of support to individuals, families and schools, being engaged in buying more loan books, videos, and resources for all phases of schooling containing a positive portrayal of Traveller culture, which it also encourages schools to buy. The guidance available to schools is particularly detailed. It has developed a culture based literacy scheme, a pack for raising awareness in schools and posters with cards depicting modern images of Travellers to counter stereotypes. It is involved in monitoring racial incidents and any exclusions involving Travellers. For families who still travel, including showmen, it provides lists of contacts elsewhere in the country (and Europe) to help maintain continuity of schooling and works with schools to develop distance-learning packs. It has also for many years, along with the Traveller Support Group, given help with form filling and referrals to a host of other agencies.

A recent museum exhibition highlighted the history of Travellers in the county and their contribution over several centuries, and this was backed up by some materials and activities led by a museum educator working with groups of children. This was developed in conjunction with the TES and details checked with local Travellers. A travelling exhibition in 2004 celebrating cultural diversity included Traveller culture and there is a music project of which some details are given later. Multiple copies of a video made by the Traveller Support Group to counter negative stereotyping and celebrate culture were bought by the library service.

There is a play scheme established by the Traveller's Support Group and operated under a service level agreement, working with 150 children and employing six part time workers who are themselves New Travellers. A joint project involving the WMESTC, Save the Children and the Countryside Agency – the Hereford Early Years Project - was active until recently and the learning and development boxes it devised are still available to families from the TES.

Although aimed at adults, it is worth mentioning a staff member of the Primary care Trust who visits sites with the Health Bus, uses TES literacy materials to offer skills for life training.

Herefordshire can point to above average attendance compared to other LEAs, not least in secondary schools – the age at which attendance is typically prone to fall off. Some success with GCSEs is evident, with seven young people since 2000 taking 53 GCSEs between them. In 2003 a Romany girl was a student governor and winner of two prestigious awards at the College of Art and Design. Another Traveller girl who attended the FE College worked afterwards for the TES. OfSTED has praised several County schools for good practice in relation to Traveller pupils; this is unusual nationally, Traveller pupils being the UK's lowest achieving ethnic group.

### *Experiences*

A New Traveller mother told us of initial reactions when her daughter (now six) went to school. She felt the school, and especially the head-teacher, had been very helpful and supportive. There had been some issues around the way her daughter looks ('very long and quite wild looking hair, tended to look a bit dishevelled, that was just her way of being') and some of the other girls had picked up on this and excluded her from their group. Having spoken to the teacher and to the head about this (and having encouraged her daughter to have a neater haircut to achieve her wish to fit in) the conflict had gone to the extent that on the afternoon when our interview took place she had been invited back to a friend's house.

There had been an episode where her daughter had been taking other girls' hair-slides and hair-bands from their trays in school and bringing them home. Whatever the reason for the thefts, the Head had been very understanding to the point where she had even bought some hair slides herself for the girl, giving them to the mother. She had not been offended by this, and saw it as a sign of caring and support for herself and her daughter.

Once or twice her daughter had brought a school friend back to the caravan. The friend's surprise at the way they lived, the fact that they didn't have a bathroom, toilet etc. had had some repercussions at school, with other children using the information to make the daughter feel uncomfortable. This seemed to have been addressed, not least due to the understanding and the efforts of the school.

However, the Traveller said that her daughter was sometimes left feeling isolated as a result of the content of the school curriculum, which did not tend to take alternative lifestyles into account. She gave the example of a science lesson where the children had been asked to count the number of light bulbs they thought they might have in their houses. Her daughter of course, had to explain that they had none, and only used candles.

A now settled woman of Romany heritage had a further account of difficulties experienced by her children at school. When she had been living on a site her children travelled to school with non-Traveller children by bus, where they were persistently bullied. Complaints to the bus company resulted in referrals to the school, who said it was the responsibility of the bus company. Indeed her older two children were 'put off' school by this treatment, and her youngest, now at primary school, is not known to be a Traveller by the school or the other pupils.

## **Health Provision**

The Health Bus scheme referred to earlier is an unusual and innovative project. It grew over a period of years out of a long standing provision by the Health Authority for Travellers and the personal involvement of successive health visitors, aware of poor health amongst Travellers, who nationally have low life expectancy and high perinatal mortality. In formal terms the Project took on its present form in 2000, employing a driver and two nurses full time and having various associated staff with whom appointments can be arranged, including a GP who is involved for three days a week, and speech therapy. Its brief is to provide 'access to health care, information and support' to Travellers and hence to travel to sites county wide, though in practice because of the geographical distribution of Travellers its work is mainly in the north and north west of the county. Visits are timetabled and publicised in advance so as to make the facility available to the maximum number of people and the schedule is altered according to demand and population shifts. When our researcher was present it was noticeable that a range of support was given outside of narrowly defined 'health care'. The workers confirmed that help in dealing with form filling and dealings with officialdom (including phone calls) were a significant part of their work.

Other support is offered via the bus, so for instance on one of the days our researcher accompanied the bus the SureStart midwife was present as was a Skills for Life tutor (who offers basic literacy work with the use of a laptop and therefore also some basic IT skills). The Skills for Life tutor was there in the hope of seeing the mother of the family to arrange some literacy sessions together (most of the Irish Travellers are not literate).

We were told by more than one informant that Romanies made little use of the health bus service and preferred to have a 'normal' GP, many of whom have numbers of Romanies signed on at their practices with good and enduring relationships, an advantage perhaps of an enduring semi-rural 'traditional family doctor' pattern with trusted and known GPs. Of course since the majority of Romany families are settled in houses a mobile health centre would not necessarily address their needs, and there may be some feeling that a bus is second-class provision compared to seeing a GP with all the facilities of a surgery. A different perception was held by another informant working as a professional, viewing the Romanies as often very benefits-orientated, seeing a risk in becoming 'too healthy' in case certain health related financial benefits are withdrawn and thus being less than pro-active and preventative where their health is concerned (in contrast to New Travellers who were perceived as being concerned about their own health). Nevertheless, while a researcher accompanied the project for a couple of days the staff actually visited three settled families in the north of the county, presumably something of an exception. In fact the Bus cannot register Travellers as patients, so it is quite possible that many of the people they see are registered elsewhere.

Despite these observations and comments, statistics provided by the Health Bus project confirmed that while New Travellers make up the majority of their patients, in terms of numbers choosing to access the GP through the bus, New Traveller numbers were almost matched by take-up from Irish Travellers.

The breakdown of patient contacts with the project since it became operational is:

New Travellers	267
Traditional or Romany Travellers	176
Irish Travellers	98

While staff on the project are conscious of some feeling amongst the non-Traveller population that their funds would be better spent on the majority population, they also note the difficulty experienced in recruiting staff to work on the project, fear of Travellers amongst some fellow health professionals, with a belief that they are volatile and potentially threatening. On the other hand, the bus itself has a rule about a minimum of two staff needing to be present at all times, a mobile phone which must have a signal in any place the bus parks, and staff mentioned to us an early incident of an assault by a Traveller.

As the review commissioned by the project indicates, it adopts a social model of health. This is clearly the case, since in our time with the project we observed the work of someone from SureStart, a Skills for Life tutor, and the 'medical' staff involved in helping with form-filling, validating identity in paperwork and liaison in relation to benefits and rent arrears. Travellers we met felt they could get such help about any aspect of their lives. While the commissioned review sought to assess the project's impact upon Traveller health, it commented

...the overall assessment of whether the Project is worthwhile and should be continued will probably depend on judgements of the value (sometimes symbolic) of assisting extremely marginalised and socially excluded groups in the population (Niner and Freeman, 2003: 2).

It was suggested to us that the Health Bus project had been seriously undermined by being unable to acquire a central base, this being turned down on planning grounds (arguably because of local businesses' objections). Alternatives were proposed, but were deemed so unsuitable by those involved as to be 'insulting'. Some perceive this as a highly unhelpful decision on behalf of the Council, providing further evidence of an uncoordinated or unconcerned approach to Traveller issues. This may be further evidenced by the puzzling inability of the bus to enter the Pembridge site because the barrier is locked and they have been provided with no means of opening it (according to one official source for 'health and safety reasons'). Nevertheless it is worth repeating that all those we spoke to felt very positive about the Bus Project, feeling it made significant contributions in terms of trust and informing various agencies about Traveller needs.

Irish Travellers made regular use of the walk-in dentistry clinics in the county. These clinics do not take on NHS patients in the sense of arranging regular check-ups and making future appointments, but since they are known about within the Traveller population they seem a very effective way of meeting the dentistry needs of a mobile population.

### **Relations with the police**

As was indicated above, some Travellers and those seeking to support them have many positive things to say about the police and their positive engagement with issues around site use and the devising of Council policy. It has also been suggested that the recent appointment of community support officers has been a positive development. In the past the police have inevitably been the agents of enforcement for decisions about stopping places unpopular with Travellers (though note the positive relationships described under '*Culture clash, prejudice and exclusion*'). They have also been necessarily involved when the common assumptions about Traveller dishonesty have been manifest in concrete accusations. The dependence upon vehicles for those actually engaged in travelling also provides a potential point of conflict in respect of roadworthiness, insurance and the like.

In some parts of the country (though not especially, according to our various informants in Herefordshire) the issue of drug use amongst New Travellers is another obvious potential point of friction. We were made aware of specific cases of children taken into care or put onto the child protection register because of parental drug abuse, but it would be going beyond the evidence to say whether this is more or less common than amongst non Travellers, amongst whom there is a 'major problem'.

Although the police can be involved in conflict situations about moving on, we did not receive particularly negative comments about this. One Traveller told of an occasion when some New Travellers were being moved from a site and word had got round (by mobile phone) that there was to be a party before they left. Apparently many more Travellers than had been expected turned up, with the result that over a period of a week road blocks were set up to stop more Travellers getting through. Nevertheless, the police presence stationed at the site to keep order were supplied with hot drinks and a bonfire to keep warm, being regarded (by one informant at least) as friendly and as 'just doing their job'.

A different New Traveller recounted an incident detailed below under 'culture clash' which was more to do with a shop's reaction to her than that of the police, but she received no apology for her wrongful treatment and commented that her small daughter had had enough negative experiences of the police to make her afraid of them.

We received less positive comments from a settled Traveller who had on occasion received racist abuse and harassment from neighbours (causing her to move house). Despite having been invited to provide training for Community Safety Officers and having developing contact with the police service, she expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to deal effectively with such incidents should they happen again. On the other hand, she felt progress was being made.

The draft report contained a passage relating to a specific incident involving members of a 'settled' Romany family. As this matter had been the subject of a criminal conviction and having taken legal advice, this passage has been removed from the report. It is nevertheless appropriate to report that the perception of this family is that they are suspicious of and have negative expectations of both the community at large and the Police.

## **Employment**

The agricultural base for Travellers' livelihood is no longer anything like as significant as it was in previous decades: the kinds of crops grown have changed considerably requiring a longer harvesting season and more intensive labour. A small number of Romany Travellers still move for seasonal work, some are engaged in hop tying and apple harvesting where this is not mechanised and there are large (perhaps misleading) gatherings at an annual horse fair in a neighbouring county.

Largely because of these long-term changes in agriculture, employment has become more varied. Some settled families (it is assumed) are merged into the general workforce and we know recent school leavers have gone into a variety of jobs (hairdressing, supermarket cashier, waitress, mechanic, factory worker) while others have gone into further education. Others are involved in a 'traditional' occupation of collecting and recycling scrap metal; others find niches in the economy related in some way to seasonal and rural work: dealing in horses, dog breeding, hedge trimming, tree management, barn maintenance, fencing, laying tarmac, sales of items like garden gates, repairing/sharpening lawnmowers and shears, and seasonal selling of holly and mistletoe. Irish and Romany Travellers are also part of informal networks that feed the antiques trade. In Leominster there are numerous settled Traveller families and historical evidence of yards that used to be foci for a Traveller economy. It should be remembered that traditional Travellers have always had to fight for survival in providing for their families, on the margins of society and seldom having regular work they could rely upon. The experience of marginality would be compounded by the insecurity of their lack of tenure on any stopping place.

## **General community involvement**

Religious involvement is slight, although as mentioned already Irish Travellers preferred their children to attend Catholic schools. Funerals and marriages are generally carried out in Christian churches (except in the case of New Travellers) and there are known to be some Traveller family plots in county churchyards. Funerals are major events in Traveller culture with up to 40 trailers expected at times. The Trailer of the deceased is sometimes still burnt, though for the person burial is invariably used rather than cremation.

We are always wary of using the term 'community' for a minority ethnic group that is scattered and small in number. However, our interviews suggest there is some sense of community within each of the main three Traveller groups, with effective networks of families and other connections.

## **Culture, culture clash, prejudice and exclusion**

It is not always easy to pin down what is distinctive about Traveller culture, not least when we are discussing three different groups one of which has largely stopped travelling (though not of its own volition). It is even more difficult to explain to house-dwellers what it is about a travelling lifestyle that people seem to feel is 'in their blood' and important to their identity, and such a task is beyond the scope of this study – except to state that is powerfully still true that Travellers regard themselves as different in ways they are proud of and which they want to retain. It is also the case that the lifestyles of Travellers are vulnerable and fragile. Some Travellers feel too little effort is made to consider what might be valuable in their heritage or lifestyle, in terms of values and attitudes that might provide a broader perspective on a diverse world, and perhaps any such appreciation will be celebrated eventually, perhaps posthumously, when their lifestyle no longer exists.

As regards the artistic and creative aspect of culture, the Traveller Support Group facilitated the visit of a Hungarian Gypsy band to all the sites a few years ago, and there is a music project that works with all Traveller groups.

The matriarch of the Irish Traveller family we visited has lamented to the health workers that her children do not speak the Irish Traveller language/dialect, and that she and her husband seem to be part of a dying generation that are familiar with it. She clearly has concerns for the sustainability of their cultural heritage as an ethnic group. There are other obvious aspects of their distinctiveness, such as attitudes about gender and sexuality, which we have already mentioned. Several informants wanted to discuss the difficulties between Irish Travellers and the majority population (and indeed other Travellers) feeling they were particular marginal to 'mainstream' society with a culture and way of life in many ways anathema to the settled majority. Indeed the word 'feral' was used by an informant on one occasion, and while Irish Travellers may not welcome such a word the speaker claimed to be using it in a descriptive rather than an insulting way with reference to the need to make a life where possible outside the conventions and rules administered and documented by the state, in respect of house dwelling, employment, health care, benefits and taxation.

We were told that their behaviour is considered anti-social in the extreme by many in the county, being held responsible for theft of caravans, leaving large quantities of rubbish, untrue declarations in benefit claims and criminal damage to Traveller sites. Some of those who work with Travellers and respect their choice of lifestyle nevertheless drew our attention to large discrepancies between admitted savings in benefit claims and later expensive weddings or substantial purchases of land and caravans. It is not known whether extensive lending and borrowing exists within the Irish Traveller community that may account for this.

New Traveller culture is subject to much negative mythologizing and strictly speaking (since they are not an ethnic group) not of particular relevance here. It is worth pointing out, however, that in relation to the stereotype of considerable drug use a 'clean' policy was strictly enforced at the private site we visited.

It was very clear that this was not something that the site community would tolerate and there were severe penalties (expulsion from the site) for those who failed to follow this code. This did not save them from unwelcome assumptions from, for instance, GPs. It is also worth saying that the group 'New Travellers' contains many different motives for being on the road. Some have a principled preference for the countryside, mobility, a greener lifestyle etc. Others are 'contained' by the group and might be a much greater strain on public resources if this were not so. The Health Bus workers observed that there were some quite damaged people, one living quite alone in very basic accommodation, a very silent and withdrawn man who sometimes simply came and sat in their Bus.

While at least one local pub has banned New Travellers from drinking there –quite legally since they are not an ethnic group - one interviewee who has been a Traveller for over ten years said that apart from the inevitable occasional run-ins with the police (over moving on) she had experienced hardly any directly negative reactions at all from the settled population (although others she knew had had different experiences). The exception to this in her own experience had happened only two or three weeks previously when she had taken her small daughter into a shop in Hereford to buy new trainers. They had then stayed in the store to browse, and her daughter had been looking at some books. When they left the store, they went outside and sat on a bench, but after a short time the police approached her and said that they were arresting her on suspicion of theft. She denied this and a WPC was called to search her. Upon arrival, this WPC took the Traveller and her daughter into an alley by the side of the shops, frisked her clothing and checked her bags for stolen goods, finding nothing. Because of negative experiences with the police in the past, the daughter is very frightened of them and became very upset, and was crying. The woman was not offered any apology, only a reason for the treatment, which was apparently that a member of the public had seen her waiting while her daughter was reading, and had assumed that she was loitering with the intent to steal goods from the store. She did not lodge any formal complaint (later regretting this) but she did go into the store and complained to the manager about calling the police, though she was not offered any apology by the store either. She said she feels the episode happened because of the way she was dressed – quite flamboyantly, and wearing a large hat – and that this drew attention to her as somehow 'different' from the rest of the shoppers in the store.

Romany culture is subject to some benign stereotypes (barrel top caravans with people selling wooden clothes pegs) as well as some negative ones (dirt, and in the past stealing babies). An extended conversation we had with a now-settled Romany woman revealed the importance of her cultural heritage to her identity and sense of herself. She had informed herself of various practices of which her own family was uncertain and clearly saw value in maintaining these despite the settled life she now leads. She told us of several practices long established around birth and death, for instance, and naming, as well as the declining role of arranged marriages – and the slightly increasing incidence of intermarriage between Romanies and Irish Travellers. As it happens, the décor of her house showed none of the features common in settled Romany houses and usually reminiscent of a style common in trailers: plates on display, glassware, polished brass items.

Like other informants, she stressed that the Romany language is alive and well in the county, though covertly. It is impossible to say how many people use it and in which spheres of their lives, but it remains covert because of the persisting stigma of 'being a Gypsy'. She described the constant dilemma of what very light skinned black people call 'passing': not acknowledging her heritage with anyone other than those she trusted, not with neighbours, nor her child's school. In her own case this is coupled in a complex way with becoming more assertive and proud of her roots and a greater unwillingness to tolerate harassment and abuse, but she was convinced that most Romanies would continue to keep their identity secret until racism against them was substantially diminished. She is in the very early stages of convening an anti-racist group in her locality, recognising what she has experienced as similar to things visited upon visible minorities. One subtle but persistent effect of negative stereotyping she suggested was the frequency with which she observed obsessional cleaning and hand-washing amongst Romany women.

She was convinced this came about because they had internalised the majority population's view of them as 'dirty Gyppos', and while this may be disputed (indeed it has been by other informants) it is worth reporting as a perception.

## Summary of key issues

*Male youths.* While secondary school attendance in the county is higher than the national average for Travellers, some concerns were voiced about a small number of disaffected adolescent Traveller boys with behavioural problems, who on nearing the end of their compulsory schooling start to get into trouble with the law. Long periods of detention tend to fatally damage such boys' education: they are likely to be taken off their school roll and there is long waiting list for the only specialist provision. The minimal amount of home tuition then available leaves a lot of time and opportunity for further trouble.

Others found that opportunities for short-term jobs in the kinds of marginal occupations followed by their fathers were perceived to be more attractive than school or other potential jobs or careers.

*Youth provision.* A general lack of provision for youth in some of the county towns affected Traveller youth. Youth club provision is patchy, with some clubs (allegedly) being known for drug abuse and hence considered off-limits by Traveller parents, a view reinforced by their fears of mainstream sexual mores. There is a need for more outreach work to these young people.

*Confident handling of child protection cases* was suggested as a 'potential' problem. With negative, suspicious or cautious attitudes both from and to various agencies, and varying degrees of ignorance, it is at least possible that some children's needs are not met.

*A coherent and supportive policy about sites.* The Council's policy contains many reasonable and accommodating sentiments (not surprisingly, since several people concerned with Traveller welfare contributed to it) but it seems to have made little progress in its goals. In practice there appears to be an at least implicit policy of neglect towards official sites and a perception by some (but not all) of those involved that planning permission for private sites is only granted after a battle. One site on which some Travellers are legally living is in a state described to us as 'dangerous and appalling', apparently being left this way while an illegally camped family are removed. Romanies have had no option but to move into housing as no pitches in the County have been available. A young Traveller couple marrying have to either go elsewhere to pursue a travelling lifestyle or face a continual series of evictions. All the former roadside stopping places have been blocked or ditched to prevent access, the 'official' transit site built for the purpose because of a recognised need is closed, and Travellers stopped illegally are moved on. Any proposal from outsiders to administer a private site on behalf of the Council should not diminish its responsibility to Travellers, and should have clear and agreed criteria in relation to selecting tenants, tenancy rights, rent control and rights of access by TES and health services.

*Relationships between the different groups of Travellers.* This is related to a coherent and informed management of site provision. If one has become by default an Irish site more smaller sites with no transit places and perhaps one main family in residence may be a partial solution. There is certainly continuing potential for conflict between different Traveller communities (and indeed we were told by one Romany between different sub-groups of Romanies, whose feuds may last many years). We were told of one Irish family who are the subject of an injunction forbidding them to stop within the county boundary, partly because of their aggressive behaviour towards other Travellers.

*Contact and liaison with 'officialdom'.* Some officials are clearly well respected and trusted by Travellers and some less so. It was both our finding and that of the Review Team from Birmingham University that the Health Bus staff was regarded very highly, enjoyed a high degree of trust and provided an effective link to other services. This was due to considerable empathy and involvement on their part.

Some Travellers told us that before this project no-one really seemed to be 'on their side' and able to be effective in helping them, one describing the Health Bus as one of the best things that had happened for Irish Travellers. Others perceived the TES at least as highly, it having gained trust from having been closely involved with more than a generation of Traveller families.

There is an urgent need for the proposed post of Gypsy liaison officer to be filled, with careful thought as to which Council department he or she should be managed by. The post is unlikely to be effective if seen as an addition to the staff of an eviction department.

*Economic vulnerability.* Those who still travel are a vulnerable group in terms of their financial status and their lack of tenure.

*Negative perceptions.* Many Travellers experience negativity towards them from the population at large, a negativity that is partly generic but sometimes specific towards a particular Traveller group. The negative image of the Irish is about dishonesty, stealing and leaving sites damaged or rubbish-strewn and they may face double discrimination for being Travellers *and* Irish. The New Travellers are viewed with some distrust because their lifestyle is elective (and they are perhaps seen as equally undesirable whatever the reason they found it difficult or impossible to fit into a regular 'settled' lifestyle). They are also viewed with some suspicion regarding an assumed use of drugs, and a propensity for 'rave' gatherings, although there seems to be either little inclination or opportunity for the latter in Herefordshire. On the whole, there is little in the way of positive and pro-active attempts to celebrate or give approval to the lifestyle of any of these three groups by the community they live on the fringes of (although positive examples exist). There appears to be suspicion of their lifestyles, partly founded on a lack of knowledge and understanding, and partly founded on experiences of or rumours of socially unacceptable behaviour by some Travellers. Schools do not appear to be hostile to Traveller children's presence (which is not always the case in other parts of country) and we have positive accounts from some parents and observers.

## **Groups identified by their employment: Seasonal Foreign Agricultural Workers**

### **Background**

For some years Herefordshire has had relatively large numbers of temporary seasonal agricultural workers resident here for up to six months, from around April/May to September/October. They have been mainly present in Britain under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) – in existence since the late 1940s - of which more details are given below. The national scale of this scheme has been increased considerably recently, with quotas growing from 15,200 in 2001 to 20,200 in 2003. In terms of length of stay, the legal boundary of the SAWS has been May 1 to November 30.

Some may also be present under the Sectors Based Scheme, which allows a 12 month stay and is restricted to a range of work for which British resident workers cannot be found: specifically hotel and catering work, mushroom production and meat and fish processing. Hotels in the county may account for a small number of the 20,000 permits expected to be issued for the UK in 2003/4, and insofar as there are vacancies for animal gut removers, bone breakers, bone extractors, meat cold store workers, meat cutters, packers and processors and people to work in slaughterhouses there will be foreign workers. Their numbers are not significant compared to those working in crop growing and production and they have not been part of the county's workforce for long, but a local poultry producer employed up to 50 Eastern European workers under the Sector based Scheme in 2003.

Employers explained the changes in agriculture that have created a need for temporary summer labour. Some were formerly engaged in cattle or arable farming and have now turned to producing fruit, soft fruit and potatoes, although others stressed such produce had been produced in the county for many years. Hops, a traditional product of the county, are now a less profitable crop than strawberries.

*There are pressures on everyone in growing. It is a marginal occupation. We do a lot of packing and storing, so that makes a bit extra besides growing and picking.*

One of the employing agencies told us that the 'season' now extends almost throughout the year, with work on turkey farms later in the season. Farmers were therefore keen to have the migrant workers as long as the work was available and some new regulations, which came into force in January 2004, will facilitate this (see below).

In any case, such produce is highly labour-intensive to grow and to harvest, and the 'traditional' temporary labour force – women who would bring their children with them while they worked – would have been insufficient even if it were available. It was not available, it was suggested because of the availability of other work, people's preference for less physically demanding work, and the greater strictness of health and safety law relating to children on farms. According to DEFRA, as well as receiving lower wages, workers in Herefordshire work longer basic hours and Herefordshire has the highest part time employment rate in the region with 32.3%. The area is experiencing significant out-migration of young people of the same age as the migrant workers. All the employers also regaled us with stories of the unavailability and unreliability of local British workers.

A Home Office review of the SAWS (2002) remarked

5.1.3 Many farmers and growers advertise their seasonal vacancies with the Jobcentre network but in general are disappointed at the low numbers of referrals and the motivation of those that do apply. From this source resident workers can also be discouraged from undertaking seasonal work by the distances they are required to travel to their place of work.

5.1.4 The disruption to workers' incomes as a result of moving off and on the benefits system in order to take up seasonal work is also perceived to be significant in discouraging resident workers.

Speaking from experience, they asserted that their operations would be entirely impossible without workers from elsewhere, who one described as '*By and large ... a decent intelligent hard-working bunch*'. Not surprisingly, the farmers claimed to all know each other, so this mutual contact is likely to have an impact upon wage rates, expectations about facilities, shared problems etc. One sought to emphasise that the workers were paid the standard minimum wage, more in some cases with piecework, and had no 'contributions' to pay, adding that if he had any English workers he would have to increase their rate of pay to compete with this. While he did not categorically say that he did have any British workers, his comment was '*we can't be fair to "our own" workers*'. The attitude towards the workers of only one of the owners might be described as seeing their presence as necessary but regrettable, preferring if only it were economically/practically possible to employ local workers.

### **Needs of the local economy**

The migrant workers are a clearly key element in the economy of Herefordshire, since 'figures show the agriculture/fishing sector to dominate the economic landscape of the county' (*Herefordshire Partnership*; 2004: 80) and a good deal of Herefordshire having agricultural employment rates far higher than the national average: in significant parts of the county it is more than 25%, in at least half it is more than 10% (DEFRA). According to a report in the *Hereford Times* in August 2003 Herefordshire leads the whole of Northern Europe in organic soft fruit production. The numbers of seasonal workers are increasing: in 2002 DEFRA put the figure at 1,689, almost exactly the same as for 2001, but our best estimate is that in 2003 there were at least 3,000 temporary agricultural workers in the county<sup>1</sup>. This compares with a local workforce in their age-group (20-24) of only 7,000 and a total adult full time workforce of 79,000. According to DEFRA they make up close to half of the seasonal workers in the entire West Midlands area ([www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/docs/wmchapter](http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/docs/wmchapter)). Nationally, the Home Office estimates that about 34% of all agricultural workers are seasonal (not all of them foreigners).

Their contribution is partly in the fact that they make certain kinds of farming possible at all, and partly in their spending power when they are present in the county. Apart from this, agriculture provides other benefits to the county in terms of some year-round farm employment for locals as well as employment in transport, machinery supply and maintenance etc. A farm that employs 100 foreign seasonal workers is likely to employ 15 locals all the year round. With the closure over recent years of some large employers the economic significance of the farms is underlined. A Home Office report observed

The employment of resident workers in agriculture, many of whom are full-time, relies on the existence of casual workers to meet seasonal peaks in the industry. Recent research has indicated that migrants do not harm the employment prospects of the existing population (Home Office, 2002, para 3.7).

Of course most of the migrant workers' earnings are repatriated to their home countries – that is after all why they come – but the addition to food supermarket sales must be considerable. Some supermarkets have up to one thousand extra customers a week for the best part of six months, all of them buying what they need to sustain them in a 60 hour week of manual work. A large employer claimed this amounted to £300,000 a week in the height of the season.

### **Gathering information**

In investigating this aspect of Herefordshire's workforce and economy we met with five employers, speaking with them for 45 minutes each. Having established some key issues we spoke with four others by telephone. The size of their enterprises varied from one with over 600 workers, one with 500, one with several concerns employing between one hundred and two hundred workers and several with much smaller numbers.

In general (though see below) the workers are employed for the best part of six months. We also interviewed two of the large recruiting agencies on several occasions – the workers have to go through these agencies in order to obtain a visa and have been described by the Home Office as ‘a cost effective means by which small and medium sized farmers in particular can access labour from a legitimate source’. The two we spoke with are the largest of only seven licensed to recruit workers, and they are both registered charities rather solely run-for-profit commercial agencies. One is run under the auspices of the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs.

80% of the workers are employed by only 20% of the farms, so they are mostly working in fairly large concerns with many other workers. The average workforce is 40 but this is misleading since some have fewer than ten and some have hundreds.

### **Countries of origin**

The workers come from a wide range of countries, mainly in former communist countries in Eastern Europe: Moldova, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Latvia and Estonia (we were told there were also smaller numbers from China, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Macedonia). One agency has tried bringing temporary workers from India, but it was not successful and not continued after the first year: the Indian workers ‘were not happy in Herefordshire’, many of them (the agency said) being young people from wealthy backgrounds who wanted to improve their English but were unused to physical work. Nevertheless, this agency was resolved to continue to try to find Indian workers in the future, presumably young people with different backgrounds and a different agency said it currently had a handful of Indian workers and was looking to recruit more (see further comments below). On all the farms with which we had contact there seems to be roughly equal numbers of men and women, some coming as couples and many in small friendship groups. The Eastern Europeans have always been students in their home countries, this having been a condition of getting a SAWS visa, as was a maximum stay of six months (although we came across one or two who had had their visas extended, their employers seemingly instrumental in helping with this). They have not been allowed to bring dependents, nor change to any other kind of visa while here, nor to change employer (though in this sense the employer is the recruiting agency, who can for various reasons – including a workers’ request – move them to another farm). New regulations on managed work permits from January 2004 suit the farmers very well, as they incorporate the longer (year-round) season referred to earlier (although the maximum continuous stay will still be six months). In the changeover between different visa regulations some workers and employers benefited from workers being here for more than six months but this was exceptional.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the countries currently sending summer workers to Herefordshire joined the EU in 2004 and their citizens no longer require visas, or the special access they currently provide to the British economy and its wage rates. It is highly likely that fewer young people will come from those countries and if they come at all they will not be restricted to working in agriculture, a fact that the supplying agencies are only too aware of. One said that Chinese workers were ‘*proving to be very popular on the farms, both because of their excellent work ethic, and their willingness to be friendly and communicative insofar as language allows*’. Russians and Ukrainians will presumably still come. In the past, this agency has had workers from Kazakhstan, India, and Pakistan and they are always seeking to widen their recruitment base, though not surprisingly recruitment from places further away has not been so successful because of the travel costs incurred. About 50 students from the Indian sub-continent are being ‘piloted’ in 2004, and South Africa and hitherto unused eastern European countries are being considered. We mentioned some Portuguese workers earlier, but it should be noted that within most of the ‘old’ EU there is little economic incentive to be a seasonal worker except where there is a marked contrast between wage rates.

It was suggested to us by one source in the Council that some of the workers were not in the UK legally, and the Home Office Review commented that in the height of the season extra demand for workers may be taken up this way. Undoubtedly some of the workers are illegal and there have been occasional cases of illegal workers being found and deported (though in fact from businesses which might seem less seasonally affected).

We have no way of knowing the numbers here, but it is likely that any illegal workers would make up a small proportion. The expansion of labour-intensive agriculture has coincided with the availability of a ready and legal supply of cheap, controllable and well educated labour in Eastern Europe, so the ease of recruitment, regulation and quality of the SAWS workers must leave little incentive for large employers to recruit illegally, not least because it would be difficult to pay them significantly less than their SAWS workers. To cut wage costs by paying below the minimum wage and perhaps to evade housing costs, smaller employers may recruit all their workers through 'gangmasters', or networks not registered as one of the Home Office's licensed Operators (though in the cases reported in the press the employers were not prosecuted for employing the illegal workers, indeed they helped the Immigration Service catch them). By its very nature, such recruitment and employment is not as accessible to this kind of research and rumours about it are hard to prove or disprove.

### **What's in it for the workers?**

As stated above, currently they are always students, usually paying for their own degree studies at home, though one farm owner said they could buy a flat for little more than one summer's wages in Lithuania, something partially confirmed by a couple on another farm who had indeed bought a flat outright in Lithuania from their joint summer wages. In terms of the spending power of the money they earned, in Romania for example, three months' pay was said to equal three days here. In the Ukraine, one month's pay might equal about five days in the UK.

Most workers stay the full six months if the work is there, though some appear to be present for a shorter time, perhaps four months. The typical working week is around 60 hours, starting early to try to beat the summer heat (in the very hot weather of 2003 this meant starting work at 5.00 am and finishing at about 3.00pm, though some workers mentioned the hours of 7.00am to 5pm as more usual). Pay in 2003 was at the national agricultural minimum wage (around £4.50 per hour, £5.15 for non-harvesting tasks if over 19 years old) with a piecework element on top of this. Under the Agricultural Wages Order (DEFRA, October 1 2002) overtime must be paid at £6.75 for over 39 hrs per week, or over 8 hours in any one day. One farmer said that the workers have to be paid 'holiday pay' but we were unable to clarify this.

Two employers told us that the workers' visas require them to be employed as daily casuals, so no contracts exist, they receive no pay if they are ill and anyone can be laid off permanently with no notice. This was partially but not entirely confirmed by the Home Office staff administering the scheme. Workers are employed by the farms, not the agencies, and must be employed for a minimum of five weeks to get a visa at all, so a daily casual contract would not be possible. It is certainly true that if the harvest finishes early, or is very poor, so does the job, but this is subject to a minimum period of 5 weeks and does not apply to most of the workers most of the time. The Home Office official confirmed that SAWS workers are not entitled to sick pay.

Their visas allow for no tax to be deducted up to a threshold of £4,615, which is close to what they earn in six months after the typical deduction at source of around £25 per week for a quarter share of a mobile home provided by the farm, the cost price of coaches for any tourist trips and the (apparently rare) final deductions for damages. It was not clear to us how aware the workers were of this limit, or whether there was any tendency to leave once the threshold was reached (when they have to apply for a tax code). Any temporary residents specifically employed in either agriculture, horticulture, or in improving their English with the specific intent of becoming an English Language are exempt from National Insurance contributions for the length of their stay, whatever their total earnings.

One owner said ‘*A good many of them feel hard done by*’ in relation to both their wages and possibly in relation to the facilities they are offered once they arrive:

*...when the students come here, they have no idea. Their expectations are so high. They see the UK as all new cars, new homes, they think everyone lives like that. They don't realise that none of this is paid for by cash, that people have loans and mortgages. They imagine that most English workers are on £50 an hour. .*

We referred above to the changing political geography of Europe and hence the potential sources of workers. It seems unlikely to us that workers from the accession countries will continue to make up such a large proportion of the workforce, and indeed very few may come. As the quote above indicates (and it was echoed by others) the students' image of their time in Britain was somewhat different from the reality of a mobile home in a very rural area. Though they may not be successful, it is highly likely that they will seek different kinds of work in towns and cities. Should accession country students still come, employers will have far less power over them, and they will of course have access to other work outside of the former regulations. If they find such work in the County they will obviously not continue to live on the farms. The probability is, however, that Herefordshire is very unlikely to see much of an influx from the accession countries since there is little work to attract them other than the work they have been doing for years. What is more likely to change is the makeup of nationalities amongst the seasonal workers.

### **Interviewing workers**

We met with six groups of workers, in groups varying in size from two to eight people. On one occasion the employer preferred to be present. In one group one of those present was designated as the liaison officer between the workers and the owners, and had been working in Herefordshire for three seasons. In another the group facilitator was from one of the EU accession countries and now works in the UK full time for the company, which employs 500 seasonal workers. She originally came as a seasonal worker, and now does all seasonal worker administration. We have no way of demonstrating that the individuals present were representative of all the workers. All those who spoke with us were volunteers, but were inevitably those whose English was good enough for a group discussion. Some interviews took place during the working day, two were at the end of a day (and the workers were visibly tired). Comments and findings from these interviews are integrated within subsequent sections.

### **Relationships with employers**

The circumstances of the workers have elements of the feudal about them, with employers assuming a range of responsibilities beyond simply exchanging pay for work – a range of responsibilities that we suspect surprised some as the practice of employing foreign workers developed. One of the interviewed staff in a recruiting agency was very aware of some relevant cultural differences and has visited the workers' own countries to foster good relationships. She stated her concern that they feel comfortable about their experience working in the UK. The employers we spoke with were undoubtedly genuinely concerned about the welfare and experiences of their workers: they knew a lot about them, one on a larger farm had visited several of their home countries, others had received very genuine invitations from departing workers. All those with whom we spoke seemed to emphasise the good relationships they had built up with their workers. Where the business was run by a husband and wife team it tended to be wives who were most centrally involved with all aspects of their workers' lives – health, contact with home, housing (including details of who shared with whom), pay, banking and international financial transfers, mass transport to shops, tourist coach trips, the provision of leisure facilities like TV, some free bicycles, a football pitch, basketball, volleyball and table tennis. Employers also have had the power to enable a worker to return, since the recruiting agencies tend to check their approval for subsequent visas.

An example of the unusual power held by farm managements is in relation to pay. Each worker has a separate pay account held by their employer from which they can draw cash at will. Their closing balance is generally paid direct to home country banks when they leave for a fee of about £15, which some employers described as complex and bureaucratic while others seemed to think it straightforward (one said it was a big problem and was meeting with banks to resolve it, another simply did not describe it this way at all). Employers identified a problem with the workers taking out UK bank accounts, some in the past leaving with overdrafts and being untraceable. But having identified this as a potential issue, employers have and use the power to prevent it by simply refusing to sign the initial reference needed to open an account. (One farm at least was an exception to this and did not have an 'internal banking system', but opened accounts for all their students at one of the high street banks. The students then just used their cash cards in the town like anyone else.)

We have absolutely no evidence that this degree of power held by the owners was ever exercised other than benignly, though it is evident that exploitative employers with anything to hide would hardly volunteer to talk with us with the ready willingness displayed by those we interviewed, or be so helpful in organising group interviews for us. The recruiting agencies were particularly helpful in facilitating access and contact with farms, one sending a letter out to all the farmers on their books explaining that research was being conducted and that they might expect to be contacted.

Whether a farm has a resident workforce of hundreds, a few dozen, or a handful it is clearly in employers' interests to have good relationships and a harmonious working environment, with enough knowledge of their staff to be able to anticipate problems and difficulties before they interfere with production. For some farmers it is difficult to draw a line between 'home' and 'work', living in the centre of their job makes the two facets wholly enmeshed. This, together with the fact that some workers ask to return to the same farms in subsequent years, suggest it is fair to assume that genuinely supportive relationships do exist between employers and employees as the set-up, even on the large farms, has the feeling of being familial, even if institutional. This does set up certain obligations on the part of the employers. They are not *in loco parentis*, but for most of the young people this is the first time they have been abroad alone, or at all, and inevitably some need support.

The large farms we visited seemed to have appointed a 'student liaison officer' to take care of the pastoral needs of the students, and to feed these needs back to the attention of management for further support if necessary. This person was usually someone who had been to the farm two or three times before. At the largest farm, the management said they were so concerned that they were providing for the workers in terms of national and international standards of human rights legislation, that they have appointed a consultant specialising in human rights issues to advise them and update them on legislative changes. The managing director showed an extensive questionnaire provided by the consultant and subsequently completed by the farm. This same farm has invited, on at least one occasion, a race equality worker based in the county to talk with the workers.

Thus while it is inevitable that the employers are in the more powerful position, this does not necessarily mean that they are deliberately exploitative. More than one owner felt aggrieved by the feeling that there was a general impression by 'the public' or 'the media' in some cases, that these workers were being taken advantage of. On the other hand, another farmer said 'some employers are pretty mean' and as we suggested earlier it is possible that for short-term crises some employ illegal workers outside of any rules about pay and conditions.

## Facilities and accommodation

The farm facilities consisted mainly of second hand mobile homes and caravans, some with bathroom facilities and kitchens, while others shared communal ones. Some 'portacabin' type accommodation also exists. We saw a barn conversion at a large farm, downstairs housing social facilities – bar, TVs Playstation and so on - while the upstairs containing a room couples could book for the night for some 'personal time' when they wanted to be away from more communal facilities. Smaller employers do not provide the range of other facilities, though we were told that 'basic' items like TVs and access to machine machines were 'naturally' available. As indicated below, the recruiting agencies have a legal responsibility to ensure there is 'decent accommodation' but the workers are not legally obliged to live in it. In practice almost all do because there is little practical alternative: public transport does not serve many of the farms, working days are long, it is far cheaper than anything else they will find. A typical daily rent seems to be about £3 per head including electricity and water, and there was some outside lighting such as one might see on a campsite. The accommodation was not luxurious but we have no evidence that the workers were dissatisfied. The Home Office Report of 2002 argued for a continuing obligation on the part of farmers and growers to provide accommodation of an appropriate standard as a condition of participating in the scheme' but while it notes various issues of concern it gave no indication that accommodation standards were an area of dissatisfaction. However, One farmer observed

*The agencies are imposing ridiculously high standards of accommodation. All rooms have to have curtains now. After 1<sup>st</sup> September, all rooms have to have heating. The standards are unrealistically high.*

This farmer may have been used to workers only being present during the warmer summer months, but considering the length of stay that is increasingly common we were surprised that he thought it unreasonable to expect heating to be available. Whatever the temperature, the privacy afforded by curtains seems a reasonable expectation. In fact, the employing agencies are given certain responsibilities by the Home Office, and their website aimed at prospective foreign workers states:

'The Operators regularly inspect the farms to ensure they are:

- offering appropriate work;
- looking after your health and safety; and
- providing decent accommodation.

'Before you leave for the UK, the Operator will provide you with an information pack describing your placement and terms and conditions. The information pack will include these details:

- the sort of work, starting date and how to get there;
- pay and deductions;
- how much work is available, including overtime;
- your hours of work and breaks;
- your holiday pay, sick pay and bad weather pay entitlements;
- your employment rights, including rights to written terms and pay details;
- your rights and responsibilities under health and safety law;
- the minimum standards of accommodation you can expect.'

The Home Office's 2002 Review of the scheme recommended

'All Operators to be required to provide clear, consistent information to SAWS participants prior to their entry to the UK. The information should be in a language the recipient will understand and includes their rights and responsibilities on the scheme; a clear, transparent and consistent appeals and complaints procedure; health and safety matters; and the costs they can expect to incur while on the SAWS.'

Which suggests this did not always happen in the past.

Some students said that the agencies in their home countries sometimes build up unrealistic expectations of working in the UK, and this can cause some initial disappointment when they first arrive. (This might concur to some extent with the comments cited earlier where the farmer described expectations as sometimes unrealistic – although this does not seem to be a general feature of the workers' experience).

On one farm at least one of the sectional plastic greenhouses was in use for drying clothes. On another farm we saw a licensed bar and disco area, facilities for showing films, video games, a football and volleyball pitch, and a swimming pool is planned for next year with the site already decided. Although in general the summer working season is outside the student-workers' academic year, if they stay on until November there is some overlap. We found one large farm with a 'quiet room' where students could work and some certainly get sent work from home - it was unclear whether this was from fellow students or from tutors – usually over the Internet. The most valued facility we found was the provision of fourteen computers with Internet access on-site for their personal use. At another farm the worker facilitating the group particularly wanted to say that the company have been trying to organise an Internet room for the workers, but have had obstruction with planning permission. On another farm the farmer had concerns about high phone charges for Internet access, on another there was unwillingness to provide Internet access because of the potential use of pornographic websites. It is hard to ascertain if these were genuine concerns, lack of knowledge (for instance about declining connection charges) or rationalisations for avoiding the expense of providing the facilities. TVs seemed to be available on most farms, which the workers said they watched though their employers thought they did not. One farmer spoke of weekly trips arranged over the summer to various places around Britain, charged simply at cost, her husband referred to a smaller number, the workers said 'sometimes' there were trips.

All the workers we spoke with thought that the 'student village' life was very amenable in terms of a sense of community, the opportunity to meet people from other countries, the social life, the support, the fact that they were all young people together and could therefore speak a common language of 'youth culture'. One farm said that they had had two weddings as a result of people meeting on the farm.

It is important to state that we saw such facilities on the larger farms, and the best facilities by far were at the farm with the largest workforce. The unit cost of such provision for smaller employers would of course be much higher and their workers do not have the range of facilities described here, or of course the contact with other workers.

As regards facilities off the farms, as we have mentioned the larger farmers tended to arrange free or at-cost buses weekly to the nearest large supermarket (though one farm was 20 minutes walk so there were no buses). Some workers felt this weekly trip was not enough and there may well be issues about adequate storage space for fresh or chilled food. An employer felt that access to Hereford was 'not too bad' since the 20 minutes to the bus route would be 'nothing exceptional' in the home countries and the hourly bus service was adequate. Not all the workers agreed.

Several workers mentioned the proximity of lakes and rivers to their homes and the fact that they missed easy access to somewhere to swim. With shopping and Internet access (see below) appearing to fill much of their Saturdays, not many found the time to get to the swimming pool in Hereford, which closed at 5.00. The cinema in Hereford was rarely used and there is no cinema in Ledbury.

One owner complained about the strictness of planning law, preventing them from building anything more permanent that would not be prohibitively expensive. An application to convert a former nursing home in Hereford into accommodation for up to 60 workers was turned down in 2002, presumably through the objections of neighbours. In 2004 planning permission for a new dedicated housing centre (with tarmac roads, swimming pool, cinema, sauna, shop, bar, internet room, library, disco and medical rooms) for around 1000 seasonal workers was turned down by the Council by an 18-1 vote, a decision that featured on national news broadcasts.

It had national resonances because of widespread sensitivity about 'floods' of foreigners coming to Britain, an anxiety that confused refugees, accession country workers, illegal workers exploited by 'gangmasters', criminally inclined foreigners, and terrorists. Some of this confusion appeared to feature in the Council debate that rejected the scheme (and there is more evidence of it in the housing survey quotes later and in the comments of a neighbouring farmer who wanted a three-metre fence around the camp and all 'delinquent employees to be disciplined and expatriated').

This is a climate that makes it difficult to square the market demand for cheap food with the most basic housing needs of the workers that grow it, with the economic pressures upon farmers. The application –supported by the County's Chamber of Commerce, the NFU and many businesses who would presumably feel some benefit from it - was refused 'because of the impact it would have on the countryside' according to the Council leader, but the national coverage was less about the unattractiveness of associated extra cultivation under polytunnels and the additional three lorry movements per day during the season than the presence of the foreign workers. Knowing the volatility of the issue, it could make easy copy for the media, but the *Hereford Times* reports did not in any simplistic way stoke up hostility towards the foreign workers. At a public meeting called in Leominster by the local MP, an attempt by the BNP to make the issue explicitly about 'race' was apparently unsuccessful.

### **Contact and relationships with local people**

Contact with the local population may vary in different localities but seems to be limited to encounters in public places: the street, the big supermarkets, village shops and pubs, occasionally on buses and in public libraries. On the whole the foreign workers tend not to use pubs, which are very expensive compared to their home countries, preferring to buy alcohol in supermarkets and consume it at the camp (mostly apparently at the end of the working week). This may vary slightly with area and perhaps proximity to particular pubs, since three groups did speak of using local pubs in Ross-on-Wye, particularly a disco pub, apparently very popular on a Friday night. Another other local pub used was close to Ledbury. The locals were all described as very friendly and the workers felt they were made to feel very welcome. In Ross-on-Wye, only one girl said that she sometimes felt some lack of friendliness from the local youth in that she felt they were unwilling to mix, rather than any outright hostility. However, a male worker in the same interview group said that he had a good rapport with the local young men, who often wanted information about particular girls from the farm whom they wanted to get to know. We wondered, for instance, if local youths had ever turned up at the workers' accommodation in any threatening way, but no one knew of this happening.

No-one amongst the workers made any suggestion of any conflict with local people, indeed several workers readily agreed when one commented how friendly people were, greeting them in the street in the knowledge that they were foreign workers. Local people were generally said to seem not to care about the workers speaking their own languages out and about on the street and in the town and they didn't feel inhibited or disapproved of in this context. On the whole, the workers said that local people, and British people in general, were very friendly and very helpful. Locals would take the time to give directions and to help them in any way that they could.

One farm (the largest) said that in the high season they banned workers from going to the local village, as they did not want it to be overwhelmed with their workers. However, he then said that local people had got a petition together (signed by 300 people) to say that the students *should* be allowed to visit the village. It was unclear whether this was because of the local trade implications. This is in stark contrast to another village referred to below, under the heading of 'friction' and of course the planning application referred to above.

A farm that used Hereford for shopping said that there had been accusations made against the foreign workers regarding shoplifting, but these had been unsubstantiated, and the managing director of the farm had himself gone to the supermarket to intervene on the one or two occasions that this had happened.

Two farms (one near Hereford, the other near Ross) said there had been some complaints about litter, but any accusations against the foreign workers had been unsubstantiated. Another farm near Ledbury told us that locals had accused them of littering during the 'Ledbury in Bloom' week, but that the local vicar had written to the local paper to defend the workers and to praise their behaviour.

One farm (near Ledbury) said that as the farm facilitated discos every weekend, some of the local people had complained of the noise at night. The workers said that they sympathised with the local people, but for them it was the one chance in the week that they were able to really relax and enjoy themselves.

## Friction

On the other hand, there is presumably at least a little irritation associated with the (apparently) local conventional wisdom that it is best to avoid one town's big supermarket on a Friday night, since the combined shopping of up to 800 workers from the three local farms always takes place.

This kind of reaction was expressed much more strongly elsewhere. We referred in the previous section to an employer perhaps misguidedly forbidding workers to go into the local village. Some incidental findings from a Housing Needs Study carried out by HCC around a village of perhaps 1200 people suggested that villagers were 'upset' by the numbers of foreign workers

The topic receiving the highest number of comments (35 comments, 13% of all 272 respondents) was the fruit picking enterprise adjacent to the village, employing large numbers of seasonal workers. Those commenting felt uncomfortable with the large influx, and/or felt that the caravan accommodation used for these workers was unsightly. ....[....].... Three people felt that it was unfortunate that some properties had been bought up for renting to seasonal workers.

The employer had told his workers not to go into the village and some confirmation about feeling in the village may be indicated by these residents' comments. While there is some concern about unsightly poly-tunnels and heavy lorry traffic, there is also considerable hostility to the foreign workers on the basis of numbers:

- *...I think (the fruit farm) are virtually taking over...*
- *...We have been informed 918 foreign workers will be arriving this summer. How can a village like .... cope with this number.*
- *... their workers should be housed where their huge numbers can be absorbed without a detrimental effect on the quality of life of the people of ....*
- *[farm company] ... getting too big and starting to over run the village - in summer there are more casual workers than village residents.*
- *an increase in population that is almost double the inhabitants of the parish during summer months...*
- *... many many foreigners and using local properties and unkempt caravans to house them.*
- *... Serious concern about the increasing number of caravans/mobile homes*
- *.... flooded it with foreign workers. These are not objectionable in themselves but the number are far too great for a small village*
- *... a large influx of immigrant population has been allowed to develop. This is changing the character of this once peaceful village.*
- *... too many foreign workers, who at the peak period outnumber residents.*
- *...We think ...[the].. parish has developed enough in some respects too much ie the influx (annually) of strawberry farm workers. [we]... do not need this peripatetic population.*

Others are specific about overloading local provision:

- *... The rampant expansion of the fruit growing business has had a detrimental effect on the village as the local infrastructure is unable to cope with the demands of 100's of seasonal workers...*
- *...We are concerned with the development of temporary accommodation for seasonal workers at [farm company] - we are told in excess of 1,000 workers at peak season - periodically overloads parish amenities.*
- *...[they]... block the very few local facilities, we have eg tennis courts, playing fields (large scale football matches)....*
- *... A further social problem the "toing and froing" of their eastern European work force to shop/phone...*
- *...Too many foreign workers brought in for the summer months. There is no adequate facilities for them, they have nothing to do in their free time, except hang around the village "a recipe for disaster". We need facilities or teenagers, pool table etc.*
- *...More leisure facilities required...*

Although one resident, while worrying about this also seems to resent the alternative:

*There are no amenities or facilities for the seasonal workers...[...]... The village shops stocking items to suit the spending power of these workers.*

As regards accommodation, while many dislike the caravans and their appearance

- *Too many rented "mobile homes" catering for temporary overseas people rather than for [...] parishioners.*
- *The village now suffers an unsightly caravan park...*
- *Development has in my view been influenced by the presence of foreign workers... [...]...with the sprawl of temporary accommodation for them. This is a blot on the environment...*

others resent the purchasing of local houses to accommodate the workers:

- *The recent tendency for certain individuals to buy up vacant houses etc for letting to seasonal agricultural workers, mostly foreign is an unpopular development.*
- *... If they have permanent accommodation then what??*

But others seem either to resent the fact that these workers are *foreign* and to invoke sometimes a vague sense of threat:

- *....I feel that if (the fruit farm) paid more for the hard labour, more locals and not foreigners could be employed ... .*
- *We are already under siege from seasonal workers...*
- *There is one large farm within the parish which ...[...]... employs large numbers of transient workers. These leave a feeling of insecurity within the village populace.*
- *... Also installing numerous caravans on his land for immigrant workers for cheap labour, regardless of the villagers ...[...]... Many people have lived [here] for a number of years and do not deserve this treatment.*

Others are more specific about the threat:

- *... villagers suffer, noise, nuisance [...]... unlicensed or taxed/insured vehicles....*
- *700 workers commute in every year to pick strawberries, they ruin the village. Cars broken into and stolen there is always a stabbing every year, police out all the time, rubbish everywhere...*
- *...gangs of pickers monopolising the local pub, playing field and telephone box at the expense of the locals.*
- *...large transient population in the summer i.e. foreign agricultural workers. This influx of people can be quite intimidating for the younger and older members of the village.*
- *The gangs of foreign workers wandering the village area is a cause for concern for parents, particularly with small children. Damage to vehicles and property has also increased over recent years too.*
- *...the village can do without the annual influx of foreigners particularly those of suspect integrity or criminality.*
- *I am concerned about the numbers of migrant workers because they are threatening in (large) groups in the street....*
- *We have for most of the year an influx of wondrous foreign workers, subsequently people are needing to fence off what was once pretty open planned gardens to keep these people off them. Some people have difficulty selling properties because of this, others are not happy to move here because of [farm company] and its foreign out of control workforce.*
- *Groups of strangers wondering round the village and using local facilities park area etc. is detrimental to the village atmosphere - children in particular feel intimidated.*

This makes a striking contrast to what everyone, employers, recruiting agencies and the workers themselves told us about their local impact. It is referred to again in the conclusion to this section of the report.

The *Hereford Times* carried an article in December 2003 about Russian-speaking shoplifters. It is worth quoting this article at length to consider its possible impact upon local perceptions of the foreign workers:

*'.... the PCs of Hereford's High Town beat [...] are thinking of having cards printed in Russian explaining rights when under arrest to shoplifting seasonal workers from the former Soviet bloc.*

*It is often at the moment of arrest that such light-fingered visitors forget any understanding of English, said team leader .....*

*[...] .... Russian remains a language common to the hundreds of Eastern European nationals that arrive in the county each summer.*

*This year, 25 of them were sent back home for stealing - admittedly a small minority of their normally law-abiding number, but enough to consider bringing in the cards next summer ...[...].*

*There has even been a proposal for Shoplifters will be Prosecuted signs in Russian on the doors of their favourite stores.*

*Those few that do steal run a big risk. Employers take a firm line that usually sees thieves - or any others involved in illegal activity - sacked and sent home.*

*But [...] does admit to a certain sympathy for those Eastern Europeans that his team catches. Often, he says, they steal towards the end of their stay - tempted by what they see in High Town compared to shops back home - and they take presents for family and friends.*

*Most get a caution if caught doing so. The cards would explain exactly what is happening at the moment of arrest [...].*

Once they reach custody, a translator from Herefordshire Technical College is rarely more than 10 minutes away and there is access to a 24-hour language line telephone link.

Shoplifting in Hereford city centre has dropped this year, with the High Town team making arrests in 80% of reported offences. '

The reporter responsible said this item was not run in a particularly serious vein and that he was conscious of not inflaming feelings in what referred to as 'the current climate' regarding anyone foreign as a potential asylum seeker. It is a matter of judgment whether it might do so or not. On the one hand it makes clear that shoplifting generally has been effectively reduced by 80%, that a very small proportion of foreign workers may be involved, that in a sense the temptation is understandable, that the consequences are serious for them when caught, and that employers take a very dim view of it. On the other hand it talks about 'light-fingered visitors', suggests that the problem is serious enough to warrant the cards (though interpreting is described as easily available) and that 'suggestions have been made' to have warning notices in Russian on shop doorways (in fact the proposal was unattributed and certainly did not come from the police). As is often the case, the article will be read and interpreted partly through the ideas and assumptions readers already have: those who know anything of them will recognise there is really no issue here at all; those already predisposed against them will take it as confirming and validating the sense of threat expressed by the villagers quoted earlier, or these 'quoted' earlier in the year in relation to the expansion of a farm:

... permission to expand its seasonal worker accommodation to around 900 people despite complaints of violence, theft and vandalism linked to the site... (*Hereford Times* 17 April 2003).

The report added '... there are fears students may [...] move on to look for work in other parts of the county ...'. though it does not say whose these fears are, nor explain the practical difficulties of a worker taking such a step, nor that there is no evidence of this happening, nor that there would be little economic incentive to do so. The Home Office suggests that perhaps 5% of SAWS workers overstay illegally.

The police told us they did *not* regard shoplifting as particularly related to the migrant worker population. It might be speculated that workers from a poorer society, where such things as electric consumer goods are more expensive and less common, would be very tempted to shoplift. Whether the temptation exists or not, the police have little evidence that the workers are any more involved in shoplifting than others of the same age from the 'host' population. Some local reports suggest the worst shoplifting is motivated by drug use and may have moved to the suburbs, areas not frequented by foreign workers.

Almost the only other explicit point of friction anyone told us about was in relation to Internet access in the public libraries. There is heavy demand for this from the workers to stay in touch with home, no computers usually being available in their camps, and the demand is almost all funnelled into Saturdays, that in general being the only free day of their week<sup>3</sup>. One of the recruiting agencies confirmed the extent of parental anxiety to stay in touch, as did one of the employers, heightening student concern about email. None of the employers we spoke to provided this facility so there was huge pressure on the libraries. It was not widely known that 'Information Shops' in Hereford, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross also had computers available to the public. An Internet café in Hereford (seemingly thought of by one employer as a partial solution, despite its expense) closed during 2003. The terminals available in the libraries are limited, Hereford itself having 18, Leominster and Ross 10 and the other smaller branches fewer than this<sup>4</sup> so both locals and the foreign workers competed for them. Not surprisingly informal queuing and keeping places arrangements arise, with consequent resentment from anyone kept waiting. The foreign workers also at times found the terminals booked out by locals for most of the day, though officially we were told by the library service that booking is not supposed to take place on Saturdays. On the one hand some workers wait a whole day to get access and to send a few emails, on the other hand a librarian reported some hostility expressed in the comments book along the lines of '*we pay our local taxes and these people don't*'.

The police appear to have had no particular involvement with these large numbers of young foreign workers. There has been an occasional issue to do with cars, workers buying them but not knowing (or being concerned about) insurance and MOT cover. Employers told us this now tended to be dealt with pro-actively, with police officers visiting larger farms at the beginning of the season and pointing out potential pitfalls and legal responsibilities with car ownership. In the nature of things this would only arise as a problem if there was an accident, and although there was apparently a fatal accident in around 2000 when two Polish occupants of a car were killed, the police have given no indications that they regard uninsured/untaxed car use as an issue of serious or ongoing concern – indeed they stated the opposite. It is obvious in visiting any of the farms that few of the workers choose to spend their summer earnings on buying cars in any case.

### **Use of other local services**

It seemed to be accepted that it would be impossible to communicate using the all the languages spoken amongst the workers, and Russian is often in effect the *lingua franca*. English lessons were generally thought to be good idea in principle, but in reality, students were often just too tired to do lessons at the end of a day's work. Farm management said that they had tried to set up English lessons and one owner felt if teachers were available the workers could do the organising themselves internally, but in most cases previous initiatives had foundered due to progressive lack of attendance by students, and the difficulties of catering for different levels of ability.

Indirectly (in the sense that they do not pay for it themselves) the foreign workers make extra demands upon waste disposal services for their considerable quantities of domestic refuse their numbers generate. Their employers are charged for this directly as commercial waste collection rather than the costs being borne by local council tax payers. This aside, and apart from shops, libraries and very occasionally a rush for dollar exchange at the end of the summer season, the local service most often in demand was health care, though not really to any great extent. By definition the workers are young, fit and healthy, though there are some common complaints resulting from the nature of their work, such as painful knees. Surprisingly, one farmer displayed some ambivalence about his workers' access to medical services:

*They use the National Health Service, They should be making a contribution to it. They don't abuse the service, but they do make use of it.*

A larger farm had an equipped medical room and an appointment system with a weekly visiting doctor (the doctor and nurse being the same ones who run the Traveller Health Bus, which has expanded its brief to include some seasonal workers). Pregnancy has been an issue in one or two cases. One farm said they signed up all their workers with the GP, another said they this happened according to need. According to employers local health provision has adjusted to the specific demands of the workers to the extent that in Ledbury, for instance, the two GP practices have devised a duty rota for foreign workers so there is always one available and a patient stays with the doctor they first meet.

On the other hand, some workers in the Ledbury area said that the doctors 'never take the time to look at you, never mind examine you' and that the standard treatment seemed to be Paracetamol. They told of one case who went twice to a doctor with pain and was prescribed Paracetamol. He became very ill in the middle of the night with 'stones' (whether kidney or another kind was unclear) and had to be rushed to the A & E department of a hospital. The waiting at A & E was described as 'terrible', with waiting for up to 4-5 hours before being seen (although this was perceived by the workers to be normal for anyone and not specific to them).

Dentistry was an aspect of health care allegedly abused in the past. With poorer provision in the home countries it was suggested to us that the blanket insurance once provided by the recruiting agencies was used to get comprehensive dental treatment. The recruiting agencies told us such insurance is no longer offered, but it was unclear to us how this 'abuse' took place, since a distinctive feature of Herefordshire's health care is the free walk-in dental clinics in several towns.

An interview at the Hereford clinic confirmed that the overseas workers did indeed on occasion use the clinics, but by no means often and certainly not excessively. No particular difficulty with their use was identified. While an employer had the impression that forms were best completed in advance and that it was better for someone not fluent to be accompanied by someone who was, the clinic pointed out that medical details such as allergic reactions had to be ascertained with certainty, and that if in any doubt at all they would use Language Line for authoritative interpreting. The workers' experience of dental treatment varied. One group said that it was prompt and efficient with same or next day treatment; another (in the Ledbury area) said that sometimes there was a wait of days for treatment. While one worker said he had had to wait for a month to get a dental appointment it was unclear whether this involved immediate necessary treatment – which would certainly have been available at one of the clinics.

In the past some workers attended Church but currently this seems to be less prevalent. We were told that the Catholic church in Ledbury at one time had special services in Polish and that some Orthodox worshippers met together, but we were unable to find out where.

## Footnotes

1. One of the employing agencies told us they had 580 on their books, the other had 1,938. Not all the workers may be accounted for this way, since some seem to be recruited through other, smaller agencies. The limit on the number of visas granted for the whole UK is set for 2003-4 by the Home Office at 25,000.
2. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004 the workers will come under the scheme of (managed) Work Permits UK (a branch of the Home Office). Under the new scheme, all the seasonal workers must be over 18 and in full time education. Workers will be able to stay for six months. However, if they wish to work for three months, return home for three months, and then return for a further six months work, they will be able to effectively work nine months of the year in the UK. This new scheme will bring the UK in line with EC directives.
3. An alternative to contacting home via email was of course telephone, and it seemed the vast majority used mobile phones. We wondered how aware they were initially of the costs, and the practicalities of using public call boxes, although this was the subject of complaints by villagers in at least one location.
4. Internet terminals in libraries: Ledbury 7; Belmont 3; Colwall 8; Kington 2; Leintwardine 2; Weobley 2; Bromyard 4

## **Groups identified by their employment: *EU workers***

While there are undoubtedly EU nationals in the county for a variety of personal employment reasons, there is an identifiable group who come for specific work mainly from Portugal. This has only been the case on any scale since late 2002. They work at a large poultry producer with a large demand for manual labour which cannot be met locally when the unemployment rate is well under 2%. They are paid £5 per hour. Their English is generally not fluent, and the company employs interpreters, partly because of stringent health and safety requirements.

We were not able to interview anyone from amongst this group of workers, but were told by the company that there were 97 employed in May 2004 out of a total hourly paid work force of 1366. 75% are male, and the pattern so far has been for the majority of the workers (perhaps 70%) to come for periods of six months or so and then return to Portugal. In this respect they are migrant workers with many similarities with the agricultural workers already discussed, except that their stay is not time limited. The reason they come to work in Britain is because of differentials in wages and the availability of work, the reason they return is that they do not wish, for a variety of reasons, to settle in the UK.

These workers may shed some light upon future trends of migration from the accession countries of Eastern Europe. The same business in the past employed a small number of Eastern Europeans under the Sector Based Permit Scheme, but they now have 54 workers from Slovakia and Poland who as new EU citizens have no need of such visas. Coming from lower wage economies it is as yet unclear whether they will conform to the pattern set by the Portuguese, but it is clear that as long there is work and insufficient local labour to do it then foreign workers will continue to come from somewhere.

There are clearly local implications. At the level of local economics and demand on local services migrant workers are always a benefit, since they arrive with none of their educational costs having been borne by the employing country, they tend not to bring children and so place no demands on local schools, they are usually at their peak working fitness so are unlikely to make many demands on health care, and when they have made enough money to establish themselves 'back home' they leave, having in the meantime spent some of their wages in the local economy and contributed to the viability of a local company. The local impact is therefore temporary and most obviously limited to housing needs, lack of fluent English and the presence of identifiable numbers of (usually) young men (some of which we know from the police became involved with a hostile group of local youths).

The workers are recruited through two international agencies with branches in the UK. One states on its website

The Food Division specialises in supplying general operative and skilled workers to many of the largest food companies throughout Europe.

Whether to satisfy ongoing production requirements or to provide manpower to meet short term needs, our Food Division has the scope and flexibility to be able to respond to virtually every scenario. Our European network of companies gives us access to significant numbers of experienced workers and allows us to specialise in supplying bulk workforces of over 50 workers.

We supply a contracted workforce, for a specified time, accommodate them locally, organise transport to and from work, and pay all social insurance and related costs. The benefits of this fully managed solution make tremendous commercial sense, absenteeism is minimal, retention of workers is very good, and having a contracted portion to your workforce allows complete flexibility against costly and stressful redundancies.

Both companies confirmed to us that they provide accommodation:

*We do not receive any contract workers unless we have adequate facilities for their arrival. [We] have an ongoing support network for them to help register to doctors and Banks etc.*

Being mostly employed in Hereford it is likely that this is a more visible group of people than those employed on the farms, not least because there is no obligation on the part of the local employer to provide accommodation. As a German informant said '*A lot of people see European countries from a political point of view, for example; European Union - fear of losing jobs, money or people might be streaming into GB*'. In our view this issue needs an informed airing in the County, to prevent a climate of half-truths and suspicion about foreign workers developing.

## Groups identified by their employment: *Chinese*

We know from Census figures that 0.2% of the Herefordshire population – about 350 people - are either Chinese or from 'other ethnic groups' (these were presumably combined because the numbers involved were very small). The national figure for England is 0.4%. Other more detailed Census data separates Chinese people from 'other' within this category, giving a total population of 210. School data lists 20 Chinese pupils in county schools, more than half in Hereford itself, with six in one secondary school and six in post-16 colleges (one of whom was interviewed).

Census evidence on religion gives 0.2% (again) of the Herefordshire population self-identified as Buddhist in the Census, but nationally only about a quarter of Chinese people describe themselves thus, with at least as many being Christian and half describing themselves as having no religion.

Extrapolating from other areas of Britain (especially rural areas) as well as national research (Modood et al, 1997), we are confident that the vast majority of Chinese people in the county owe their presence there to the restaurant trade. The 20 Chinese students at the College of Technology are all registered on part-time courses, suggesting they are in employment, though no large employer reports having numbers of Chinese workers (the city's largest employer employs one Chinese person). A search through phone directories and various trade websites, as well as actual observation, suggests that Hereford, for instance, has up to 20 Chinese restaurants and take-aways, Leominster has three, Ledbury three, Kington two, Ross two and Bromyard one. A *Hereford Times* survey of a three month period in 2003 suggested that 46% of readers had eaten takeaway fish in the chips (mainly from Chinese-run premises) and a further 42% had eaten a takeaway Chinese meal. This gives some impression of one kind of local impact the Chinese population have. These are very commonly family businesses, with couples working together. If on average each of these catering outlets has either five workers or family members associated with it the Census figures are accounted for. We were told that some catering outlets in the south of the county employed workers who came in from outside, even as far as Bristol.

Two researchers, one of whom was a fluent speaker of the potentially relevant Chinese dialects, toured Chinese restaurants and take-aways over the course of 24 hours, spending about 30 minutes in each. Nine were visited in all, comprising almost half of those we could identify in Hereford, and involving in all 21 interviewees. The visits took place mainly on two November evenings, a slack time for the catering trade, and were timed to avoid the busy times of mid and late evening. Identification and contact details were shown.

Our intention was to access people's experiences and perceptions as much as possible, and as a research technique this approach may be questioned. It has however, been employed before, and we believe it gives acceptable and valid data. On the one hand the interviewees are at work and potentially distracted, and they are being questioned 'cold' by two strangers whose provenance may be uncertain. The approach depends heavily upon having a Chinese speaker familiar with more than one dialect, who believes in the value of the research and who is able swiftly to allay anxieties and answer introductory questions. Although initial responses from interviewees were sometimes reticent these soon warmed and became more informative, with discussion becoming more and more spontaneous. In every case questionnaires were left with stamped addressed envelopes, of which two were later returned. In practice almost none of the interviews were interrupted by customers, though on the two occasions where this occurred we immediately stood aside. All the interviews bar one continued as they had begun in Chinese, though in one restaurant simultaneous interviews were carried out by the bilingual researcher and the English speaker, one with a parent and the other with an English speaking adult daughter. Several interviewees could clearly have carried out the interviews in English, (indeed some family members without direct roots in Hong Kong only spoke English) but we left the choice of language to them.

The overwhelming majority of British Chinese people have roots in Hong Kong and speak either Cantonese Chinese or Hakka. This was in the main the pattern we found in Herefordshire, with most interviewees speaking Cantonese and informing us this was the norm locally. One couple originated in mainland China and spoke Mandarin and in two other premises there were people who originated in Malaysia and in one someone had roots in Vietnam.

We were surprised at the length of settlement of those we spoke with. Most were second generation and had parents who either brought them to the West Midlands or to Hereford itself up to 20 years ago. Two couples had been Hereford residents for 26 years, another for 20 years, and several had many years' familiarity with, for instance, local schools and health services. We also formed the impression that it would be inaccurate to speak of a Chinese community. The largest Chinese population in the county is, as one would expect, in Hereford itself, comprising perhaps 100 people, but no-one mentioned community activity or meetings, and there are no voluntary arrangements for Chinese language tuition for children, something that tends to develop with larger populations or in the proximity of large towns.

In each interview a list of our main areas of interest was given, in effect a spoken version of the questionnaire and its accompanying letter:

There was a consensus that Hereford was on the whole an amenable place to live, with no pattern of hostility or harassment. Some felt the fact that it was a small town, without the larger conflicts of bigger conurbations along ethnic lines, made for a safer environment. It was generally described as a friendly environment where they did not feel isolated, but *'there are still a lot of people in Hereford who are still very narrow minded'*. Examples of name-calling – for instance by fellow customers at a local burger chain – seemed to be regarded as the exception rather than the rule. In some contrast to these spoken accounts, the returned questionnaire stated

*... we sometimes get a lot of discrimination from some small shops as well as in our own business!!... but considering Hereford has quite a small ethnic minority it's understandable....*

And another said 'yes' they had experienced discrimination but did not want to comment further. No one specifically mentioned harassment or troubles at catering premises that they perceived as racist in intent. Some were aware of such harassment elsewhere, Cheltenham being mentioned as being relatively near and somewhere where a Chinese take-away had been targeted in December 2002. People were clearly well aware of this case, not least because reports suggest that the owners in seeking to defend themselves had been arrested (*Min Quan News*, October 2003).

Some disquiet about police response time was expressed by those who had experienced violence or damage to their premises. One owner, describing his local area as 'rough', said that even with a fight in the street and some of their window glass broken the police said they were too busy to come at once. Although they attended the scene eventually, the man was not content with the follow up, and indeed expressed the opinion (not as far as we could discover shared by others) that the police did not come as quickly in response to his complaints as they would for an English person's. Of course he would have little means of knowing this, but the perception is an index of not feeling satisfied with the service he received. On the other hand, another interviewee simply stated she would not expect an instant response and that the police had competing demands late at night. Whilst recounting this story and his dissatisfaction with the police response, the former interviewee nevertheless held that Hereford was a good place to have his business.

Another interviewee found the police very slow, including an occasion where they had been burgled. The interchange he reported was as follows:

*Police: 'Are the burglars still there?'*  
*Owner: 'No, they've gone.'*  
*Police: 'We'll come tomorrow then.'*

At a different business the police were again described as unresponsive and taking a long time to attend incidents, with one clearly planned and repeated incident described, to which the police responses had been along the lines of 'we can't do anything'. Although we cannot state with any conviction either that Chinese premises are particularly prone to any kind of harassment or that owners have such a perception, we have one caveat. Some work in another rural county (reported in Gaine & Stevens, 2002) involving gradual community work over a period of months, culminated in focus groups of Chinese women in the restaurant trade expressing concern about persistent racial attacks on their premises and police responses they regarded as inadequate. This came as a surprise to all the relevant authorities, and clearly needed considerable groundwork and 'teasing out' before people felt willing to talk about it.

One interviewee described his doctor as 'great', another said local health provision was very good' and others expressed their satisfaction with local health services rating them as 'good'. We are aware that some provision in the local NHS uses Language Line when they have patients who don't speak English, though one restaurant owner whose kitchen staff speaks little English, finds it necessary to accompany them when they need medical treatment.

As regards other services, the two returned questionnaires rated the Council, welfare services, housing and support for culture and religion as only 'average' with the police and education rated 'good'. A student questionnaire was more positive, rating all those used as 'good' and education as 'very good'. The only spoken comments about people's experience of their children's schooling were positive, but in spite of generally rating education well one returned questionnaire said (with reference to a few years ago)

*When my children were at school they did experience some bullying and I don't believe that the school takes it seriously, due to the fact that the deputy headmaster made ~~racist~~ [crossed out] comments to suggest that my son would eat the school guinea pig.*

No one made any comments about relationships with the Council's environmental health department, and when prompted said they had no problems in that area. We are not completely sure of the robustness of this finding, since it may be the area in which restaurant owners may have felt the most vulnerable and least secure in talking to strangers. Council staff in the department reported no significant communication problems with kitchen staff that could not be managed effectively.

The working lives of Herefordshire's Chinese people limit the possibilities of social interaction with the majority population. For some so does English fluency, and indeed there is likely to be a relationship between the two. The extent to which this maintains an unwanted separation between Chinese people and the majority is hard to say, especially in comparison with other workers who work unsocial hours with their spouses (some publicans, for example).

We would conclude from our findings that there is no strong feeling of exclusion from public services on the part of Chinese people nor a perception that they are badly served by them. It might nevertheless be a sound investment of time for the police service to do some positive outreach, perhaps persuading Chinese people to report with the reassuring use of mobile hidden cameras (a strategy that has been used elsewhere).

## Groups identified by their employment: *Bangladeshis*

An exception to our uncertainty about Asians' economic role in the county is the small Bangladeshi population. In almost all parts of the UK outside London this ethnic group occupy a particular occupational niche: the 'Indian' restaurant trade, and this was found to be true in the county, though not quite as much as expected. An easy method of checking the Census figures is to note the number of 'Indian' restaurants and extrapolate from them to confirm population numbers.

Hereford has seven such establishments

Leominster two

Ledbury, Ross and Bromyard one each.

Our approaches revealed that, very untypically of other parts of the country, two of Hereford's Indian restaurants *really are* Indian, being run by Punjabis, and a third is Kashmiri. This left ten restaurants in the county likely to be Bangladeshi, more than accounting for the Census total of 34. One might expect a larger number, but school PLASC figures revealed apparently only one Bangladeshi child in any county school and only five students from this group in the post 16 colleges. This suggests the group are either relatively old and hence without school age children, or mainly male (though we know of a pre-school child from one of the restaurant questionnaires).

Our only other available source of numerical data relates to the county's largest employer and the employer of the largest number of minority ethnic people: the hospital in Hereford. No Bangladeshis are employed there.

The 34 Bangladeshis are virtually certain to be Muslims.

A letter was translated into Bengali and sent with an accompanying questionnaire (Appendix 2) to all the Indian restaurants in the county. The letter explained the purpose of the survey and invited either a questionnaire response or a face-to-face or telephone interview with a Bengali speaker. Three questionnaires were returned and one phone call was received. Services used were rated from very good to good.

Two of the three questionnaires returned felt highly positive about health care and the police, two thought that the Council itself was 'good' though the third thought it 'poor', and where housing, welfare services or support for culture and religion had been sought they were rated 'good', except again for one respondent who rated the last 'poor'. Two respondents had lived in the County for twenty years the other for two, but none felt they or their family had ever experienced discrimination.

## Specific Ethnicities: *Pakistanis*

Compared to Bangladeshis, no such simple account of Pakistani national employment patterns is possible so no real clues exist to whether or not the 46 Pakistanis in the county occupy any particular occupational niche. Here is no reason to believe that do, the likelihood being that they are distributed in a very individual way in the county's workforce. Fewer than ten work at the hospital, three of whom returned questionnaires (one further questionnaire was returned from those sent to schools). Of this small number, none had lived in the County more than two years unless they were RNCB students. Presumably because of low numbers, the 2003 school PLASC returns did not count Pakistanis separately (this has changed in the 2004 returns which were not available at the time of writing) but in the 2003 returns even 'Asian other' (which would have included Pakistanis) number only seven. A tiny number are listed as attending the FE college in Hereford and none attend either of the other two colleges, though there is a small group at the RNCB. It is likely that the Kashmiris running an 'Indian' restaurant identify themselves as Pakistani.

The vast majority of British Pakistanis being Muslims we could normally be confident that most if not all the 46 counted by the Census are part of the approximately 170 Muslims the Census indicates are resident in the county, though we know from a questionnaire that one is a Christian.

As for comments about life in the County, one felt that support for his culture and religion was 'poor' while another felt it was 'average'. Two interviewees commented on the difficulty of obtaining halal food but seemed to accept the inevitability of this because of the practicalities of supply and demand. Prayers and other religious practices were carried out 'privately'. Two questionnaires had positive comments about local education. Health care was rated as average by one, good by one and very good by a third respondent. Two felt that Council services were good.

## **Specific Ethnicities: *Indians***

Again, there is such variation in Indian employment patterns in the UK as a whole that no worthwhile extrapolations can be made about the employment of the 168 counted by the census. 44 work at the hospital, mostly as doctors, a handful work in Hereford in other jobs, some commute out of the County, some are associated with two Punjabi restaurants, some are in retailing. 25 post-16 college students are of Indian background (including some at the RNCB) and there are only eleven in the county's schools (five at one Hereford primary school). Of the nine who returned our questionnaire and those interviewed, their length of residence in the County varied between ten years and two months, with most having been in the County less than two years.

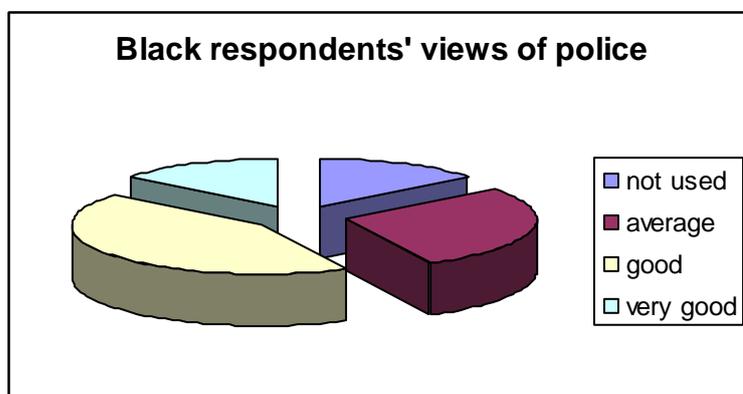
Of those who commented on the local services they had used, one rated every service 'very good', four rated education, housing and general Council provision as 'good' (one said 'average' for the latter). Five rated health care as 'good' (one as 'average') and two found support in getting a job to be 'very good'. Most had not used welfare services or the police. Experience of support received for culture and religion seemed to vary widely, two (one Christian, one Sikh) finding it 'very good', and of five Hindus two finding it 'good', two 'poor' and two 'very poor'. One interviewee felt rather ambivalent about the police, unsure of whether he had been treated fairly or not. He was not confident about asking them for help if he needed it.

British Indians are religiously diverse, but the Census figure of 63 Sikhs will certainly all be Indian with most of the remainder making up a large part of the county's 105 Hindus. Three questionnaires were returned from Indian Christians.

## Black people: *British, African and African-Caribbean*

As we said earlier, this is a disparate group of approximately 450 people about which we really know very little. It includes everyone with ancestry, however distant, in Africa: British born people of Caribbean, African and related mixed heritage as well as those actually born in the Caribbean and Africa, so we have not called it a 'specific ethnicity'. Almost half of this group are mixed white/Caribbean. About 15 work in the main hospital, a few others in the health service locally.

In the questionnaire the seven black people who replied all rated health care as good or very good except for one who thought it 'average'. Of the other services, all thought education good or very good and the Council generally 'average' or 'good' (with one 'very poor') but the remainder showed no clear pattern (or were used very little). All but two had never used welfare services, those that had thinking they were either average or good. Most had no involvement with public housing, the three who had thought it good or very good. Three people had not used any support in getting work and the remaining four varied in their opinions of provision between very good and very poor. No-one rated support for culture and religion highly, with one 'very poor', though three said 'not used'. Opinions of the police probably showed the most even distribution:

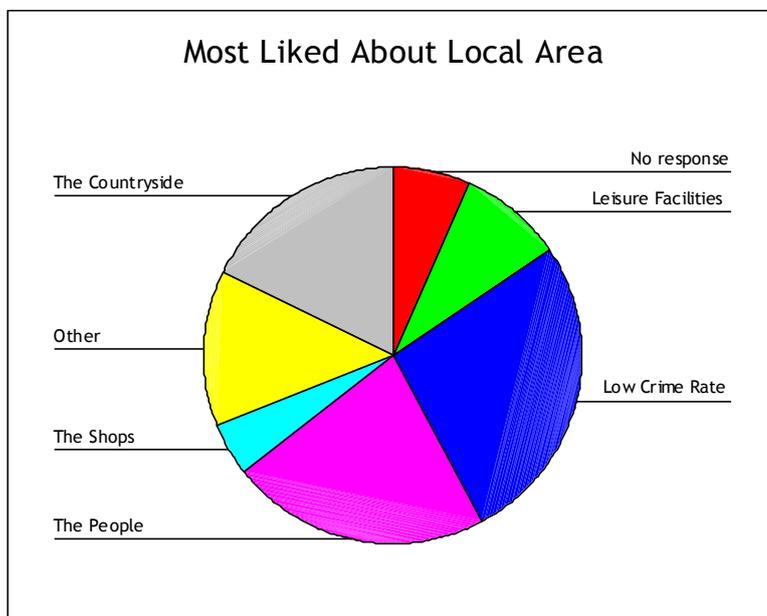


As we have found elsewhere, some black informants felt particularly targeted by suspicious staff in shops, not least security guards who seemed to expect them to be thieves.

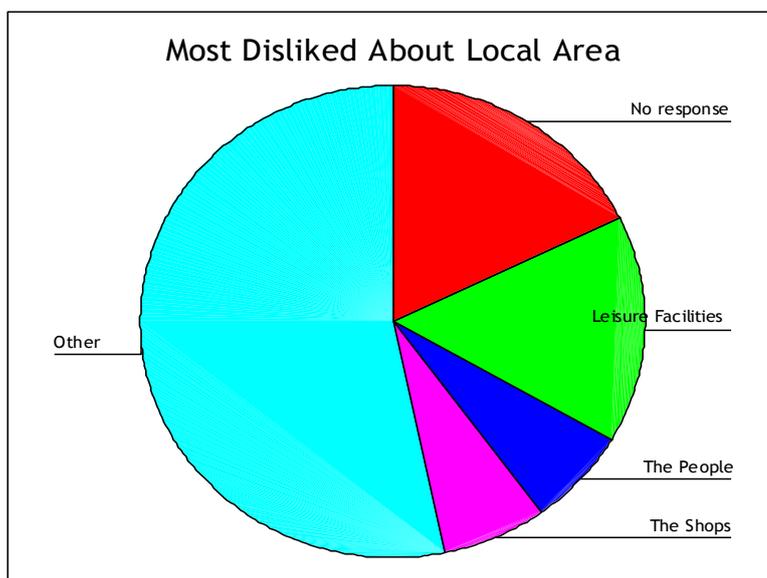
## Findings about the general experience of minorities

### Likes and dislikes

The questionnaire asked respondents specific questions about local services as well as any experience of discrimination they may have had, but it also asked what they liked and disliked about living in the area. Their answers suggest they like Herefordshire for the same sorts of reasons as the majority population:

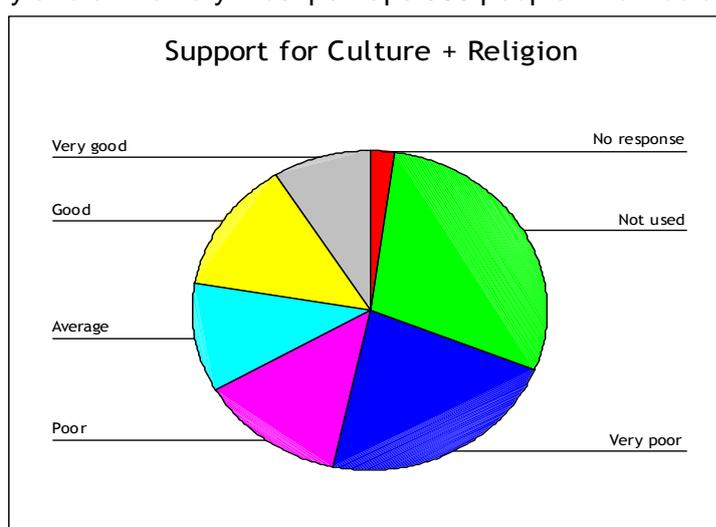


Dislikes similarly did not have any marked ethnic dimension, many of the 'other' category including remarks about traffic and distance from motorways.



## **Support for culture and religion**

We asked about this to see what people's perceptions were, though as we have mentioned already, the absence of specific communities of any size make such provision problematic. We have commented upon how disparate the Black population are likely to be and indeed it would amount to rather a sweeping racist assumption to expect common *cultural* bonds between, say, Zimbabweans, Jamaicans and the British born children of a Black/white marriage. The same must be true of the significant percentage of the County's minorities who are mixed Asian/white. Informants did make comments about the difficulties about getting specific foods, keeping to strict vegetarian diets, their suspicions that institutions used animal fats in cooking, the absence of any place for Muslim prayer, any books or magazines in minority languages in the local libraries, or any Hindi films on show, but it is likely these observations were made by way of comparison with other areas rather than in the expectation of increased provision. There are fewer than 200 Muslims in the whole county and at the very most perhaps 300 people who would understand spoken Hindi.



One respondent had a different emphasis, not on provision for minorities directly but suggesting '*cultural programmes welcoming other nationalities*', in other words something offered to the majority. This is touched upon again in the section on education but it should be mentioned that during the time of the survey there was a substantial county library exhibition on the history and contribution of both Travellers and Jews to Herefordshire.

In the case of the Jews, the small community said they experienced no significant problems of marginalisation or prejudice, indeed rather the opposite as regards the provision of a meeting place and a welcome in many schools. The same is not so easily said of Travellers, who by all accounts (and despite support from the TES) still feel culturally as well as personally stigmatised.

### **Language support**

We noticed that Social Services leaflets covering a range of concerns stated their availability in other languages. Given the range of languages listed on p9 and the small numbers of speakers we were curious about this promise would be met so we made several phone calls to different offices asking what would happen if a service user needed something translated in order to access it. We were informed that a company in a neighbouring county was able to translate most texts within 24 hours, with rarer languages taking up to five working days. This facility has not been used to any extent, but it was clear that the department knew what to do should the need arise.

A similar provision exists within the primary care trust, which uses the Language Line telephone interpreting service. Again it was noticeable that several staff knew this immediately, in the PCT offices, in GP surgeries, and at a dental clinic. Given that the number of referrals amounts to less than ten per year (through dentists, GPs and opticians) it would not have been surprising if such a little used service was also a little known service, and it is impressive that this was not the case. The education service meets few pupils who have English as an additional language needs and is currently supporting no more than ten pupils, with one full time peripatetic teacher.

## Experience of discrimination

With regard to our specific question about discrimination:

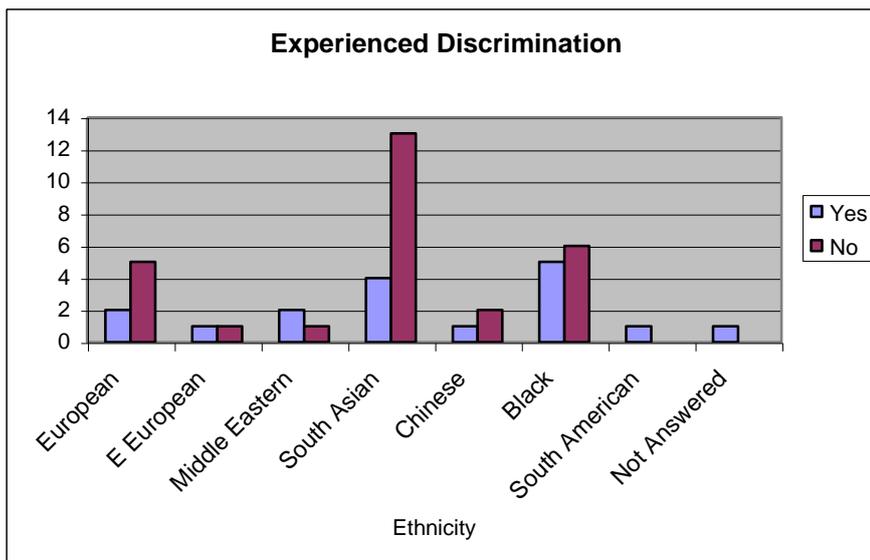
Have you or any member of your family ever experienced discrimination whilst living in the Hereford area?

YES NO

If YES, do you think you experienced discrimination or harassment because of:

Colour   
 Culture?   
 Religion?   
 Other?

the answers do not reveal any conclusive patterns:



It is certainly noteworthy that most of those of South Asian descent did not feel they had experienced discrimination, most of these are hospital staff, a position which by no means necessarily protects them from insults from the public. We tried analysing the data for any correlation between views of the police and experience of discrimination and none was found. Only three questionnaires were received from Indian restaurants, none said they had experienced any discrimination, nor commented in any way about it.

Several respondents wrote something of negative experiences they had had. Many of these involve children as perpetrators:

- *I have two daughters at school who have experienced racism, being called 'brownie' and excluded because of colour. (South East Asian male).*
- *My daughter was verbally abused from the age of nine, called nigger etc. I know from experience that there are a number of very unenlightened individuals with racist views... (White mother).*
- *Children calling names whilst playing. Was dealt with straight away by explaining to offender why it is not acceptable and then told parents no further problems children now firm friends (Asian female).*
- *Just walking along the street I heard some boys telling a racist joke using the word 'nigger'. They didn't know I was there and ran off when they saw me (Black African female).*
- *I had a problem re colour in high school, other students calling me packy (South American female).*
- *We always experience it everywhere especially where I have worked before! Neighbours do not talk to us (Black African female).*

And this is clearly about 'difference' as well as colour:

*... the attitudes of some locals [...] need to change more (New Zealander female).*

*...some people just feel that because you are in their country you should change everything to fit in (South African female)*

*Small problem with children in our area, nothing very serious (Ukrainian female).*

*My youngest child goes to a different school from the elder ones, because of the prejudice they got there... (Romany Traveller)*

*My son has been bullied for quite a while at the playground. Several boys were calling at him, 'hey Hitler, how are you Hitler?' etc. He became more and more upset. We talked about it and advised him to ignore them. But it didn't stop. (German female).*

Some relate to everyday life and social interaction. A young Chinese woman commented upon hostile graffiti, an Indian of the same age would hear herself referred to as a 'Paki', a black woman was told by a barman 'I know your type', Muslims reported some suspicion and hostility towards them. A South East Asian male said:

*[I was] mistaken for another country's national where English people kidnapped, high media profile – a lady approached me to ask me why my people could do such things.*

Though the same man added

*I have felt and do feel once people got used to me the general public and services pleasant and friendly although I realised I was one of a very few of my look and colour.*

Others had a less positive view:

*I do not feel free while shopping you always have some security people watching you as if you want to steal from the shops. They always pretend not to be there. People always avoid coming in contact with me on the street or at work (Black African male).*

*I was in [supermarket name] with another friend who is black, and we have a security guard that is always looking out on us ... it's so true, every time I go in there (young African female)....*

*Yes, yes! I get that, ..... I got used to it in London (Caribbean male) ....  
But in Hereford... it's like... it was just so blatant... And I had a friend who came down to see me here once, and she just jumped with fright in the shop 'cos he was so close to her.... (young African female).*

*I was in a petrol station and the lady serving just ignored everyone while she was just staring at this black guy filling up his car, she didn't take her eyes off him til he came in and paid... (mixed white/Asian male).*

*I said to another student I thought I'd been over-charged at an Indian restaurant and he said 'yeah well, he's a Paki' (Asian male).*

*People call me a Paki, sometimes they are really hostile (Indian female).  
This is a known national problem, talked about always in the media (Arabic male).*

*I daren't say my Dad's from Afghanistan, people think he's Bin Laden or something... (mixed white/Afghani male).*

*I was told I was not Herefordian and no matter how long I have lived or will live in Hereford I will always be a stranger (Irish female).*

They would probably agree with this plea about how minorities should be treated:

*Treat them with respect, build confidence in them ... (Black African female).*

A few respondents commented about discrimination at work (or in getting work)

*My background in work was in administration. I went to numerous interviews; my voice sounds very middle English over the telephone. However, whenever I turned up for an interview, I would be stared at and treated like an alien. A common question very often asked of me was how I think I would fit in with other people I'd have to work with (Caribbean female).*

*People do come in the shop and refer to it as a Paki shop....*

*Sometimes the people make discrimination about where can me from because we don't speak very well English. Sometimes because we work hard, try do the best we can. My son, sometimes they kick his genitals, but him say for him go away you are not our friend you no like us. One factory [.....] the team leader and another woman did one situation false [and I lost the job] (S American female).*

*Professionals employed into senior role are unable to aspire to executing their full potential as they are undermined, overlooked publicly humiliated, not listened to, seemingly only clusters of local people can and do make decisions. Many have not moved out of Hereford all their life. [...] they are very pleasant and welcoming socially (Black female).*

*People like me professionally were discriminated against for career progression and subsequent refusal to admit to specialist register (Middle Eastern male)*

A paradoxical incident occurred in one workplace owned and managed by Asians with some white employees. A delivery driver (from a much more multicultural area) said to a white employee that 'he shouldn't work for Asians' because he would be badly treated. The white employee reported it to his firm's owners, who passed it on to the driver's employer who sacked him.

One black woman elsewhere clearly felt undervalued, feeling the need for

*Diversity awareness training and application in principle. Benefits of a diverse workforce in any business organisation. Value for money staff experienced, skilled and academically astute (Black female).*

Minorities always have the dilemma of how to respond to perceived insults and unfair treatment, not least when they are unsure of being listened to:

*The racism is subtle. So when one complains about it to people, they say I'm over-reacting (Caribbean female).*

*I realised there was no point because it would be my word against hers and it would be difficult to prove. People tend to take each other's side so it would be a waste of time (Black African female).*

*If we had trouble in the shop... like a shoplifter ... they'd often call me a Paki bastard, and I used to go upstairs and just sit... it used to really upset me. Now when I see them out the shop I say 'Before you say it, yeah I know, I'm a Paki bastard...'*

*We tell them, especially my brother... if he hears a word like Paki he says 'look mate, I won't.... but if some people hear you saying that you might get smacked in the mouth, you want to be careful'. We won't stand for it in the shop. If people want to come in here they've got to treat us with respect.... (Indian male)*

*The police tried to find him as he ran off but gave up after a few minutes as no one was hurt, it was not a problem to the police (Mixed Caribbean female).*

This applies equally to the decision about when an incident is serious enough to involve the police. One South East Asian man observed that he had not told the police about his experiences because they were ‘...not serious, as no physical threat’ and others took a similar view:

*I didn't feel it was something that should be reported. I think it is just ignorance on the part of the people (Black African male).*

*I consider it beneath my dignity to respond to insults like the ones I experienced. It would be impossible to identify the person involved. It would be wasting police time, reporting incidents like these (Indian male).*

There was some evidence of more serious incidents that were reported to the police:

*My husband is white he was called a nigger lover by a racist drunk who was sent to prison for other offences. This was the only incident during the years we have lived here (Caribbean female).*

The incident with perhaps the most serious implications mentioned in the questionnaires was that of a South Asian woman who said ‘When my car got broken into, a group called Combat 18 put stickers on my car’. Combat 18 is one of the most covert and explicitly racist organisations in the UK, with an openly Nazi website, described by the BBC as ‘associated with acts of terrorism and violence including arson attacks throughout the 1990s’. Another informant expressed concern about the rise in BNP activity not far away in the urban West Midlands and another stopped wearing a religious symbol because of property damage incurred just over the border in Wales after September 11 2001 (although he is not a Muslim!)

It is very hard to draw these findings together summarising people’s accounts without over-generalising on the one hand or denying people’s experience on the other. Clearly some minority ethnic people experience being marginalised, treated differently and at times openly insulted; often this is related to colour but not always. Others do not, or at least chose not to communicate with us about it. In one detailed interview an Indian man who had been in the area some years felt he was generally accepted and respected, yet was aware of occasional comments and also thought it had taken him longer to gain locals’ trust than if he had been white. He also said there was no pattern of incidents which said to him ‘you are not wanted’. About half of those who returned questionnaires reported negative experiences, as did more than half of those we spoke with. The numbers involved are too small to suggest any patterns to do with specific groups or particular parts of the County. While we can say that children are often implicated in this, not just in school but out in the street, we cannot say that the issue is confined to children since several mention racism towards them at work.

In our judgment the following account from a 20-year-old mixed Asian/white woman may well speak for many:

*Having lived before in a mixed race environment I find it hard to fit in, I'm unusual and it's hard standing out...[...] ... On average once a fortnight (but at most three times in a week) people call racist things after I have walked past them. Aged 15-50 but mainly male. This is quite upsetting yet they only say it once I have walked past. I work in a pub and have been shouted at in this way a few times, this upsets me quite a lot. Also if an ethnic minority family walks into any pub/restaurant around here everyone turns and stares at them...*

Most informants who reported negative experiences indicated that they dealt with this either with a personal response (which they generally report as being effective) or by ignoring it, ‘rising above it’ as one put it. We believe that these are the preferred strategies of many who did not reply to the questionnaire or declined to be interviewed.

The young woman cited above observed *'I think the families [being stared at] are very tolerant'* but believed they had little choice but to put up with the stares: *'I find that drawing attention to the matter only makes it worse'*. She also said that because of this issue, despite liking the area and the countryside *'...if I had the choice again I would not have moved here'*.

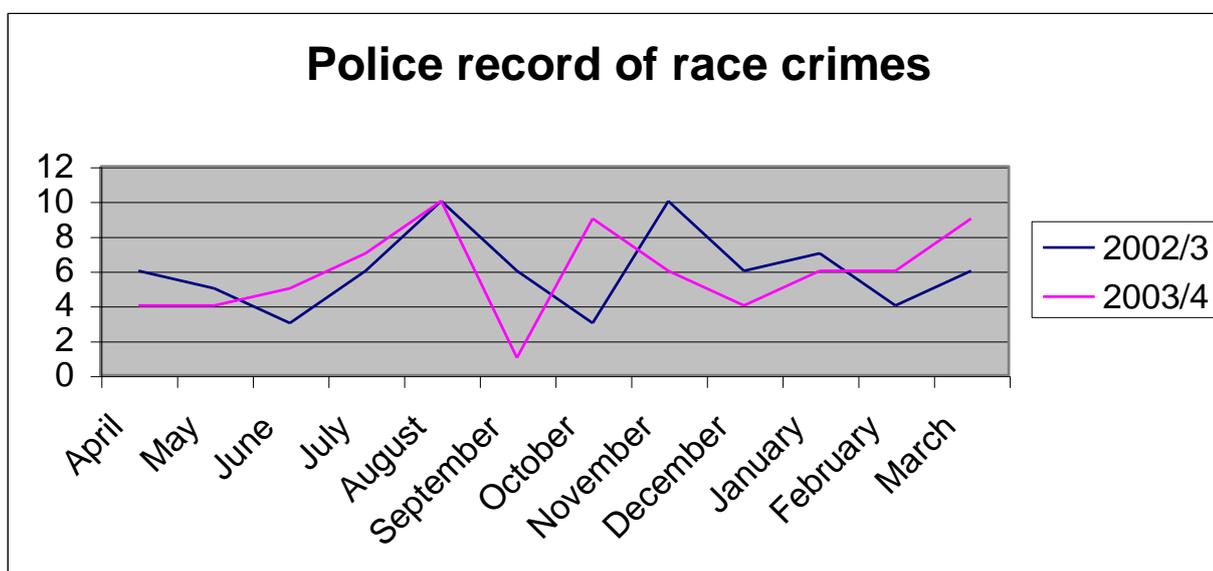
There is good reason to suggest that these negative experiences are a routine part of minorities' lives: we know from other rural areas that this is the case (Gaine & Lamley, 2003; de Lima 2000); we know there is consistent under-reporting of racial incidents by minorities subjected to them (Gaine & Stevens, 2002). Their unwillingness to spend the time and trouble reliving and dwelling upon unpleasant events perhaps does not need explaining – there have to be compelling reasons to do so, compelling reasons to believe that reporting an incident would do any good. Although the Police in the County are aiming at reports truly reflecting the actual number of incidents, commonly held reasons against reporting can be summarised as:

- wanting to forget it
- being used to it
- a fear of revenge
- knowing the offenders had gone, or would have gone before help arrived
- relevant authorities would not understand, mistrust of the police.

Some of these are reflected in the quotations above, others come out in comments made by take-away owners, two different Asian men in service industries experienced repeated harassment before any effective help was given, one interviewee commented strongly that she knew of nowhere to go with her reactions and feelings to the things that happened to her. Against this background it is worth noting national evidence that visible minorities are proportionately more likely to be harassed in rural areas than urban ones. The *Observer* in 2001 reported:

The most dangerous areas for ethnic minorities are those where there are the smallest communities. Northumbria tops the list, but it is closely followed by Devon and Cornwall and South Wales, where racial crimes affect one in 15 and one in 16 respectively. Other race crime hot spots are Norfolk, Somerset, Durham and Cumbria. Between them, the top 10 worst constabularies in England and Wales for racist incidents are home to just five percent of the total ethnic minority population.

The County is not in the worst group, averaging recently at most ten such crimes per month. If targeted at visible minorities this would give such people a one in 18 chance of being subjected to an incident per year, however we know from the police who monitor these crimes that they are not solely visited upon visible minorities (one involved Portuguese workers, for instance).

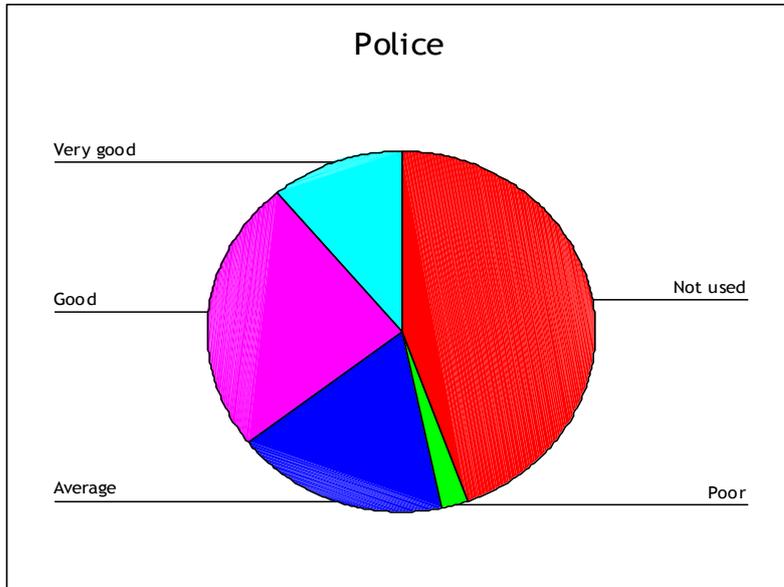


We argued above that negative racist experiences are likely to be a routine part of minorities' lives, but this is *not* to argue that the County is overwhelmingly hostile. One young woman quoted wants to leave, others regard the prejudice they meet as essentially low-level and not worth reacting to, others believe personal interaction rather than institutional responses will make the future better, others seldom encounter it at all. And all of this is not to diminish the many reasons people liked the area. Less than ten percent *disliked* the area because of its people, more than a quarter *liked* it for the same reason, including one family who received exceptional support from some white people who stood by them during some difficult months. An Indian (Hindu) college student said she found many fellow students really interested in her background and culture, Muslim students were much more reticent about even acknowledging they were Muslims. While another young Asian woman says '*people seem very narrow minded... not open to change*' she does not mean *all* local people, but she does mean those who insult her in the street and (presumably) bring up their children to do the same. There is, therefore, an undercurrent of insidious racism that many of our informants comment upon, doubtless from a minority, but from a minority who diminish the quality of life of minority ethnic people in the area.

## Findings about specific services

### **The Police**

In seeking to determine minority perceptions and experiences of the police we asked all informants for their views of and contact with the service, we carried out interviews with police officers, and considered data on racial crime. The collated views from all the questionnaires (to parents, NHS staff, restaurants and students) are shown here:



It is evident that around 45% of respondents have never had any specific contact with the police; so forming any judgement from those who have is hazardous. We are also wary of drawing too many conclusions from interview material.

From the point of view of 'race' and ethnicity, there are two distinct issues for the police: people's ideas and beliefs about fair treatment when suspected of criminal activity and people's faith in the service when they have been targeted by crime, especially race-related crime. Elsewhere in the country both facets of potential contact with the police have been subject to mistrust and poor relationships and they are interrelated: no-one who feels victimised by the police is likely to turn to them if victimised by someone else. Thus we commented earlier on the feelings of an Indian man who was uncertain about the police's response to him and his considerable ambivalence about whether he would approach them if they were needed (the need to maintain anonymity prevents going into further detail). We also cited the negative comments from a settled Traveller who had on occasion received racist abuse and harassment from neighbours to the extent that she moved. Despite having been invited to provide training for Community Safety Officers and having developing contact with the police service, she expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to deal effectively with such incidents should they happen again. On the other hand, she felt progress was being made. We mention these to stress that given events in other parts of the country and indeed in the past in the County, the Police cannot assume that minority ethnic people will trust them.

We also commented earlier on reasons why people do not report such things, some of them to do with trust:

1. wanting to forget it
2. being used to it
3. a fear of revenge
4. knowing the offenders had gone, or would have gone before help arrived
5. relevant authorities would not understand, mistrust of the police.

The fourth of these can be interpreted two ways, the first is sympathetic to the many demands upon the police and accepting that they cannot provide a truly instant response to *any* kinds of crime, the second believing that race crime has a low priority for the police, that they do not understand its impact or care.

An officer himself acknowledged that former attitudes towards racist incidents and crimes needed to change while claiming that they had, and quite significantly. It was the Police who told us of a particular case involving an Asian man working in a service industry, repeatedly experiencing racist incidents in his work. For some time ('too long') he received no adequate support from the police but we were told it eventually 'focused the service's mind considerably' (though we were also informed from a different source that some issues involving the original critical incident remain unresolved). In principle any such reports now receive a 'platinum response' and, as we noted above, the service's aim is to increase people's faith in the reporting process to the extent that their records match the real incidence of race crime. They aim to convince people like an African-Caribbean respondent who said 'What's the point?' when asked about reporting, and to convince otherwise the young Asian woman who felt no one would empathise sufficiently with her feelings. The current procedure is that an inspector reviews the handling of all such reports and all cases are reviewed regarding potential re-victimisation. This is further backed up with training, so that officers should both recognise the priorities involved in responding to race crime but also know their response will be monitored. There is no doubt this is a potentially effective institutional strategy and the responsible officers claim it has produced considerable change, indeed a 'culture shift' (while recognising that deep rooted culture shifts in organisations do not happen quickly). We know from other informants that training is indeed being developed.

Overall, therefore, as regards reporting race crime we cannot say with any conviction to what extent not reported incidents give a 'true vision' of actual incidents, but we can say that the police service at a senior level is aware of the issues that need to be tackled and constantly reviewed.

The potentially related issue of minorities' perceptions of how they are treated by the police arises mainly in relation to Travellers. In the past the police have inevitably been the agents of enforcement for decisions about stopping places unpopular with Travellers, though we did not receive particularly or uniformly negative comments about this. They have also been necessarily involved when the common assumptions about Traveller dishonesty have been manifest in concrete accusations. The dependence upon vehicles for those actually engaged in travelling also provides a potential point of conflict in respect of roadworthiness, insurance and the like.

We mentioned earlier in the report the comment by a new Traveller woman that that her small daughter had had enough negative experiences of the police to make her afraid of them. We also relayed the feelings of one family who felt harassed by the police's frequent vehicle stops and document checking, and we described an incident involving their nephews being arrested for assaulting the Police, yet the CCTV footage they showed us which they claimed showed the incident did not seem to show an assault. There is no sound on the film, but it was clear that at least one officer was saying something very hostile to the boys from (and later out of) the squad car, alleged by the boys to be racist abuse. For some time the film shows the older boy restraining his 15 year old brother, who became more and more angry. We can make no further comment about this specific incident (except to say that with the Traveller family's permission their account was passed on and we believe is being looked into by the police).

At the same time, some Travellers and those seeking to support them have many positive things to say about the police and their positive engagement with issues around site use and the devising of Council policy. But it is clear that relationships are poor between at least some Travellers and the police and this is an area that needs further focussed work.

## Education

It has already been noted that the minorities who said they had met abusive or offensive treatment had often experienced it from the young, those of school age. On the other hand, there were few specific complaints about what happened at school. Some had suggestions that may have been born from specific events or experiences:

*I think schools should be made aware of different cultures, and treat the ethnic minority the same as others (Black female).*

*The white majority just don't seem to know enough about history to understand why black people sometimes feel bad about things... (Black female).*

*More awareness of major ethnic groups living in the County and information about their religion and culture. This can be achieved by educating school teachers, information in local papers and opportunities for ethnic group involvement in local activities (Pakistani male).*

*Just stop bullying (Arabic male).*

*I anticipate some issues arising in the future when less culturally aware people realise my daughters are mixed race. We have no problems in primary school. However, they are both very pretty, intelligent and have strong family relationships so I hope we can support them (white mother).*

*I know he's going to get harassment at some stage; he's bound to, even if it's just from one or two (Indian father)*

A black woman used to living in Birmingham found great anxiety about terminology born of unfamiliarity with established debates in other parts of the country: so, for instance, fellow FE students were nervous and uncertain about whether being called 'black' would offend her.

We had several accounts of Traveller pupils being treated badly by others and not always being supported well by the school, but there were others who gave a different account and we are aware that the County provision compares very well with others and that there are examples of good practice validated by OFSTED (detailed on pages 24-5).

The German mother who earlier described her son being called 'Hitler' etc was very positive about the way the school dealt with it

*When he came out of school (about 2 months) crying, I decided to tell the teacher of the school... [...] ..."The teacher listened and was very sympathetic solving the problem. She approached the boys from year 6 and explained her concern and let my son and him play together. After that it didn't happen anymore.*

There were other positive comments too:

*I'm pleasantly surprised at how much schools, social groups etc incorporate different cultures/religions into the curriculum. (New Zealander female).*

*Level of coverage of ethnic issues is satisfactory (Indian male).*

Another Indian father had anxieties about problems his young children might face in the future, but on the whole greatly preferred the County's schools to the large urban one he went to himself. The South American woman called a 'Paki' at high school who we quoted earlier was satisfied that the school 'sorted it out' after her mother complained by giving a lesson indicating the distance and distance between Brazil and Pakistan.

The white mother of a black child wondered

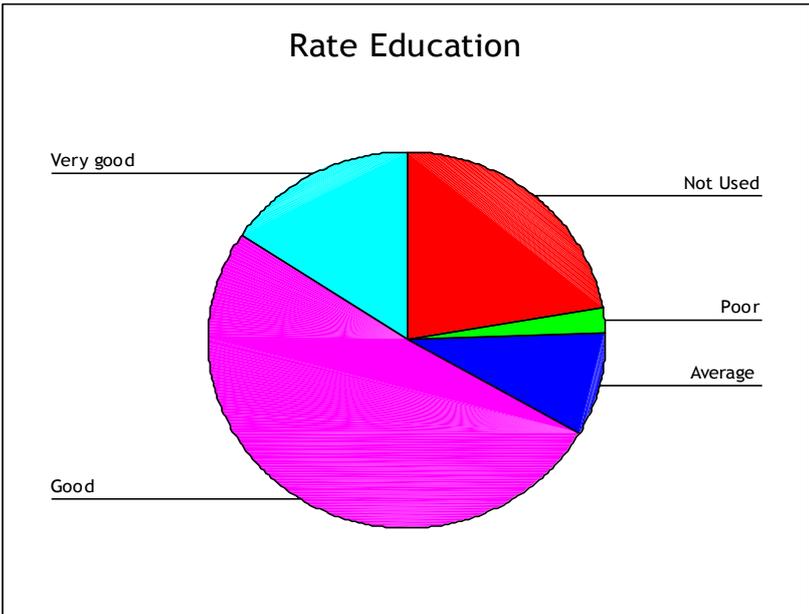
*Apart from the initiatives such as visiting schools in the Birmingham area, (a two way initiative) the primary school also invites in people from different backgrounds e.g. African drummers and has links into a community overseas. There could be more of this style of initiative. I've no idea how much cross-cultural education happens at the high schools as we've not reached that stage. I trust it has improved since I was in school here.*

Although this initially positive comment signals the difference between covering something about other cultures and nevertheless retaining deep seated racist assumptions about some ethnic groups:

*No improvement necessary, there are too many minority ethnic people from different cultures it would be hard to meet individual differences. Although the secondary school I have used was not particularly sympathetic to my son's needs. They stereotyped him, thought he should concentrate on sports instead of academic, he is black but he is not sporty, none of us are*

From much work elsewhere in the country we do not underestimate the difficulty facing schools. Young people grow up influenced and socialised about 'race' and difference from their families, from local 'common sense' and 'accepted wisdom' amongst adults and their own peer groups, from the media in all its forms (local newspapers, soaps, pop music, TV news) and from school. They (and many of their teachers) have little or no experience of the diversity that is common in some urban areas and yet they are expected with little curriculum time to immunise their pupils against simplistic stereotyping and educate them adequately to be the neighbours, colleagues, work subordinates or managers of minority ethnic people. Nevertheless, there is evidence in our findings that there is no room for the 'no problem here' complacency that has been observed elsewhere in non-metropolitan areas.

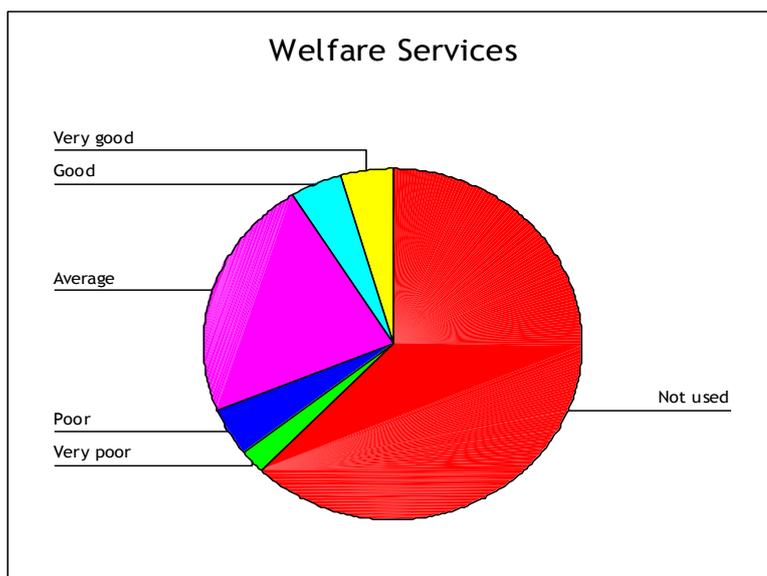
Finally, the following graph shows the overall responses from all our questionnaires, many of them from parents. As with comments about the police, it is important to say that although the questionnaire clearly focussed upon race we cannot guarantee respondents solely answered it with that in mind (as in the case of an Indian interviewee who had concerns about harassment but also thought the local schooling excellent).



## Other public services: *Social Services, Health, Council general provision, Housing*

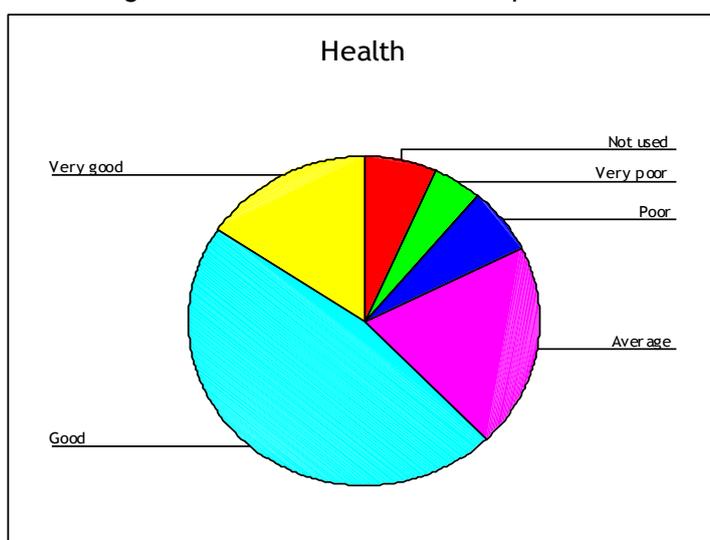
We have too little specific data to enable us to say very much about these. In all cases most respondents had not used the services and of those who had almost none made any further comment.

As with the majority population, most people have no contact with **Social Services** and this is reduced further if there are fewer older people (a characteristic of migrant groups).



The only specific comment we received about social services was from a Chinese man who had had a family member in hospital *'They are accessible but the service they provide is very slow, that is people are waiting in the hospital to be sorted out'*.

**Health** care was something most informants had had experience of and rated highly:



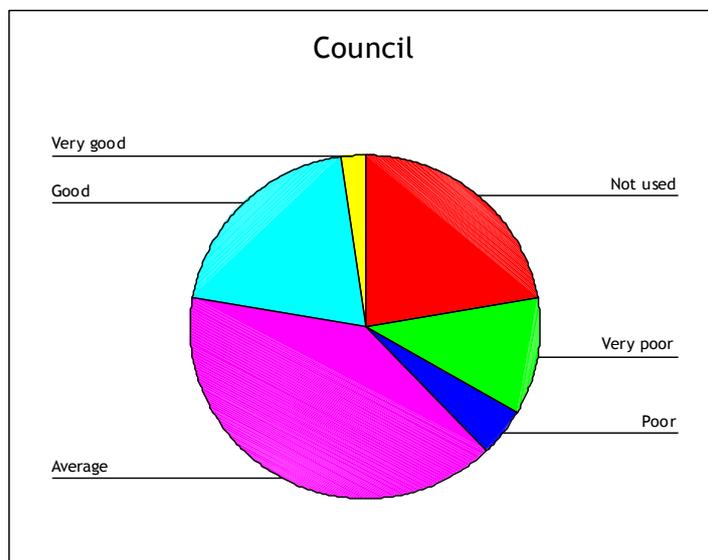
In response to specific questions about provision for dietary and religious practices, no one raised any issues in relation to health (though we did find anxiety about understanding of dietary rules in relation to other institutions).

Asking about **Council general provision** is subject to the bias that many citizens of all backgrounds are not always sure of which agency is responsible for what. We had only two specific comments about the Council

*Not [helpful] initially, but after an argument with my husband he became more helpful (Black Caribbean female).*

*Council tax and information staff efficient and helpful. Library staff (Leominster) brilliant and well informed.*

Bearing this in mind, returns were as follows:



**Environmental Health** was an area where communication problems might exist between minority ethnic restaurant staff and Council officers, but we received no comment indicating any problem with this from any of the restaurateurs we contacted. It is always possible that given the power of the Environmental Health department over them they were unwilling to take any risks in saying anything negative to researchers, although this has not been our experience elsewhere. Formal action has been taken against two catering establishments in recent years, both of them Chinese, but in neither of these was effective communication with food hygiene staff an issue.

Staff in the department agreed that there have not been significant communication difficulties about food hygiene from their point of view. It certainly happens on occasion that their unannounced visits take place when no-one fluent in English is present, but there seems to be an established practice of then doing their usual tests of temperatures etc and making a later appointment with the owner (who 'almost always' has sufficient competence in English). Leaflets about food hygiene are available in a variety of languages if needed, though it would appear that if needed, interpreting would not be readily available. Language Line is not used. Courses for kitchen staff are available in Birmingham in appropriate languages and have been taken up in the past.

**Housing** was regarded generally positively. While about a third of our informants had used nothing other than the private sector (acknowledged to be cheaper than many areas of the UK) a further third found support in obtaining housing to be good or very good. Two respondents commented on private rents being unduly high, but this might be interpreted in comparison with their previous experience in Africa rather than other parts of the UK.

## Conclusions and recommendations

1. It should be recognised that since the composition and pattern of settlement of the minority population of the County is not typical of the UK as a whole, assumptions cannot be 'imported' from more 'typical' areas nor are useful generalisations easily made
2. With the exception of Travellers and Jews, it is misleading to speak of minority 'communities'. This means representative consultation is problematic and any specific needs related to culture are not easily predicted
3. As regards seasonal workers, in the light of some hostility evident in the County, the tensions between the economic pressures on employing farmers and the strain (or perceived strain) on local facilities needs the involvement and understanding of local permanent residents. The wider impact on and benefit to the local economy from the foreign workers could clearly do with more publicity. This might include the argument that foreign workers – especially when temporary - involve no costs to the area or the UK for prior education, very little for health and by definition none for old age
4. The provision of English lessons for seasonal workers, though difficult to arrange, would significantly enhance their experience in the UK
5. Accessible email provision for seasonal workers should be prioritised by whoever is in a position to provide it
6. Relevant findings from this report should be made available on a website so as to make it accessible to the county's seasonal workers
7. Better understanding and support at a high level within the Council could lead to coherent provision for Travellers that would make the County a model for other areas
8. While health provision for Travellers is prioritised to an unusual degree it could be better supported by the Council
9. There are some persisting issues about Council provision for Traveller sites and stopping places which seem to be 'on hold' but which could be resolved.
10. Any proposal from outsiders to administer a private site on behalf of the County should not diminish its responsibility to Travellers, and should have clear and agreed criteria in relation to selecting tenants, tenancy rights, rent control and rights of access by TES and health services
11. There is a need for continued development of County services for Travellers in relation to: provision of places for boys with behavioural difficulties; youth provision; confident handling of child protection; relationships between different groups of Travellers, appointment of planned Gypsy liaison officer, awareness raising training for staff

12. The police service should examine as a matter of some urgency its relationships with all Traveller groups
13. The response to claims of unlawful discrimination under the Race Relations Acts should be pursued as actively on Travellers' behalf as for any other group
14. In relation to its enforcement activities on Travellers stopping places, the Council might consider the risk of being in breach of its duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act
15. While the police were generally regarded positively; continued work needs to be done towards achieving a 'true vision' of racial crime. Some of this work probably involves tackling *perceptions* about response time
16. The police should consider involving Chinese, Indian and other ethnic minority restaurants in the radio network currently operating for pubs and clubs. They might also consider establishing regular meetings with restaurateurs in relation to community safety. This may be especially relevant as new licensing laws come into operation, allowing longer opening hours
17. As the largest employers of minority ethnic staff, public sector agencies need to be aware that while there is no clear evidence of visible minorities facing high levels of discrimination or prejudice expressed towards them, individuals report significant, persisting and distressing incidents. Many mention children as perpetrators
18. Good practice in dealing with racist incidents in schools should be celebrated and shared widely in the County to increase teachers' and parents' confidence. At the same time the prevalence of children's involvement in racial incidents outside school should be made known to all high schools
19. The positive climate of concern in public institutions in the County to promote acceptance of diversity should be affirmed by senior management to help ensure its continuation

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# Appendices

January 2004

Dear Madam or Sir

I am writing to see if you can help me with some research I have been asked to undertake on behalf of the County Council, it is about the experiences of minority ethnic people in Herefordshire. The hospital's Human Resources Department is forwarding this letter to you based on their records of how you have described your own ethnic group. You are completely anonymous to me and will remain so. You may have recorded your ethnicity as 'not stated'; if you belong to a minority ethnic group and are willing to respond it would greatly help the research. If you are not, then please accept my apologies for taking up your time.

Clearly there are not large numbers of minorities in the County (the Census puts the figure at less than 1%) so the County Council is concerned that it knows too little about the perception of minority ethnic people of the services it provides and indeed about their experiences generally. One of the consequences of minority numbers being very small is that there are no community associations or religious meetings through which I can contact individuals. For this reason I am trying to reach individuals through large employers such as the hospital.

I would be very interested in and grateful for any help and information you are able to give me. I am enclosing a questionnaire that indicates the kind of things I would like to know but I would be equally happy to talk with you either in person or on the telephone. Myself and/or a colleague travel to Hereford regularly and could meet at a time to suit you. (The questionnaire looks quite long but please don't be put off - you will find many questions will not apply to you.)

Chichester is some distance from Hereford, but I have done this kind of work elsewhere which is why I have been commissioned. You can see something of my previous work on <http://www.ucc.ac.uk/socialstudies/html/chrisgaine.html>

Yours faithfully

Dr Chris Gaine

Reader in Applied Social Policy

All research at UCC is scrutinised by the research ethics committee and subject to national guidelines such as those of the British Sociological Association. All respondents will be guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and are given an assurance that all taped material will be wiped after transcription. From the point of view of validity as well as ethics, it is general practice to give interviewees the opportunity to comment on transcripts.

February 2004

Dear

I have been commissioned by the County Council to research the experiences of minority ethnic people in the county. The work is under the auspices of Alan Blundell, Head of Policy and Community, but it has the active support of all Department Heads.

Clearly there are not large numbers of minorities in Herefordshire (the Census puts the figure at less than 1%) so the County Council is concerned that it knows too little about the perception of minority ethnic people of the services it provides and indeed about their experiences generally. One of the consequences of minority numbers being very small is that there are no community associations or religious meetings through which I can contact individuals. For this reason I am trying to reach individuals through large employers such as the hospital but also through schools via their pupils.

I know from the LEA's PLASC returns that there is at least one minority ethnic pupil in your school and would like to ask you to pass on the enclosed correspondence to their parents. This method ensures the anonymity of parents and families unless they chose to get in personal contact with me. I have included the right number of letters according to the PLASC figures plus one extra; this one is left unsealed so you can read it.

One of my work roles is to run a large MA course for teachers, so I am well aware of the demands upon your time, but since you are one of the very few means of potentially accessing this part of the population HCC would really appreciate your help. Perhaps you would be good enough to return the reply slip below so that I know the final response rate from parents.

Ours sincerely

Dr Chris Gaine  
Reader in Applied Social Policy

.....  
I have/have not sent the letter/s to the minority ethnic parents

February 2004

Dear Parent,

The headteacher of your child's school has agreed to forward this letter to you on my behalf so that your name and address remain private.

Though I am based at University College Chichester I am doing some work at the moment for Herefordshire County Council about the experiences of minority ethnic people. I am trying to get in touch with people who have roots or origins outside Britain, whether or not they are British born. This includes people who have backgrounds in other places in Europe as well as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Africa, the Far East etc.

The kinds of things I would like to know are whether (or not) you have had problems getting or using some local services and if there are ways you think services could be improved. The County Council needs to find this out about all the services they have some responsibility for, such as schools, social care, housing and environmental health, but I am also interested in people's good and bad experiences of colleges, the police and health. This is important in helping to improve services for everyone.

If you would like to help with this survey, please telephone me on 01243 812134. I can phone you back at once to save your costs, and if you leave your name and a contact number I will try to return your call the same day. Let me assure you that your name and details will NOT be given to anyone else and no-one will be able to identify you from what is written in my final report.

If it is easier to write something of your experiences, I have enclosed a questionnaire and there is an envelope which does not need a stamp. If you find it easier to write in a language other than English please do, and if you would like an interpreter for our meeting we will try to find one.

I hope I will hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

*Dr Chris Gaine*  
Reader in Applied Social Policy

## SURVEY OF THE MINORITY ETHNIC POPULATION OF THE HEREFORD AREA

It would be very helpful if you would provide the following details:  
(but feel free **not** to include details that might identify you)

1	What is your ethnic origin?	
2	What, if any, is your religion?	
3	What language(s) do you speak? First language Other languages	
4	Are you male or female?	male      female
5	What is your age?	
6	Are you	single living with a partner/married separated/ divorced widowed?
7	Do you have children living with you? If 'yes', what age(s) are your children?	Yes      No
8	How long have you lived in Herefordshire?	years    months
9	Roughly speaking, where in the county do you live?	
10	If you do, where in the county do you work?	
11	How do you rate local services? (please tick box)	
	<u>Education</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Health</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Council</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Welfare services</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Police</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Housing</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Support for culture and religion</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<u>Support with getting a job</u> V good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> V poor <input type="checkbox"/> Not used <input type="checkbox"/>	
12	What do you most like about living in the local area? (Please tick one box)	leisure facilities <input type="checkbox"/> low crime rate <input type="checkbox"/> the people <input type="checkbox"/> the shops <input type="checkbox"/> ← other <input type="checkbox"/>



23	Have you ever contacted Herefordshire County Council about their services (for example: libraries, housing, environmental health?)	Yes      no <b>(if no, skip this page)</b>
24	Please tell me briefly why ..... ..... ..... .....	
25	How did you find out about the service(s) offered (e.g. from the phone book, a friend, a family member, a poster, local radio ...)	
26	Did you find members of staff helpful?	Yes      no
27	If NO, please tell me about this ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
28	Did you experience any problems in trying to obtain the service(s) you needed	Yes      no
29	If YES, please tell me about this (I would particularly like to know if the problem(s) you experienced were caused by differences in language or by members of staff not understanding or not caring about your religious or cultural needs, or if you experienced any racist hostility) ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
30	As regards anything to do with minority ethnic people, how could the way in which Herefordshire County Council provide their services be improved? ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	

**THIS PAGE IS SOLELY ABOUT EDUCATION IN HEREFORDSHIRE**

31	Have you used the education services in Herefordshire?	Yes                  no <b>(if no, skip this page)</b>
32	Please tell me briefly why/which services you have used ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
33	How did you find out about the service(s) offered (e.g. from a friend, neighbour, family member, someone working in education ...)	
34	Did you find members of staff helpful?	Yes                  no
35	If NO, please tell me about this ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
36	Did you experience any problems in trying to obtain the service(s) you needed	Yes                  no
37	If YES, please tell me about this (I would particularly like to know if the problem(s) you experienced were caused by differences in language or by members of staff not understanding or not caring about your religious or cultural needs, or if you experienced any racist hostility) ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
38	As regards anything to do with minority ethnic people, how could education in Herefordshire be improved? ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	

**THIS PAGE IS SOLELY ABOUT THE POLICE**

39	Have you ever contacted the Herefordshire Police about their services?	Yes          no <b>(if no, skip this page)</b>
40	Please tell me briefly why ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
41	How did you find out about the service(s) offered (e.g. from a friend, publicity, the phone book, a leaflet.....)	
42	Did you find members of staff helpful?	Yes          no
43	If NO, please tell me about this ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
44	Did you experience any problems in trying to obtain the service(s) you needed	Yes          no
45	If YES, please tell me about this (I would particularly like to know if the problem(s) you experienced were caused by differences in language or by members of staff not understanding or not caring about your religious or cultural needs, or if you experienced any racist hostility) ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
46	As regards anything to do with minority ethnic people, how could the way in which the Herefordshire Police provide their services be improved? ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	

**THIS PAGE IS SOLELY ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICES**

47	Have you ever contacted Herefordshire Social Services about their services?	Yes                  no (if no, skip this page)
48	Please tell me briefly why ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
49	How did you find out about the service(s) offered (e.g. from a friend, a family member, a leaflet, Citizen's Advice Bureau...)	
50	Did you find members of staff helpful?	Yes                  no
51	If NO, please tell me about this ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
52	Did you experience any problems in trying to obtain the service(s) you needed	Yes                  no
53	If YES, please tell me about this (I would particularly like to know if the problem(s) you experienced were caused by differences in language or by members of staff not understanding or not caring about your religious or cultural needs, or if you experienced any racist hostility) ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	
54	As regards anything to do with minority ethnic people, how could the way in which Herefordshire Social Services provide their services be improved? ..... ..... ..... ..... .....	

55	<p><b>If you have never used any of the services on the previous pages, why is this?</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">never needed to used similar services elsewhere other (please specify)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
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*Many thanks for your time. Your views are important to those funding this survey. Please now return this form to me in the reply paid envelope provided.*

If you want to make any additional comments relevant to ethnic minorities in the area please do so.

Please be assured that the information you have provided will remain anonymous and confidential.

*If you want to know the outcomes of the survey and its recommendations, they will be given to the Council in June 2004.*

*Dr Chris Gaine  
University College Chichester, College Lane, Sussex, PO19 6PE*

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01243 812134

