



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Seyyide, Ayse and Lawton Smith, Helen (2022) Engaged scholarship: addressing regional inequalities in innovation opportunities for BAME and disabled entrepreneurs. Project Report. Birkbeck, University of London, Oxford, UK.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/47649/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>  
contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

or alternatively



# ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP: ADDRESSING REGIONAL INEQUALITIES IN INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR BAME AND DISABLED ENTREPRENEURS

Ayse Seyyide and Helen Lawton Smith<sup>1</sup>

February 2022

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author [h.lawton-smith@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:h.lawton-smith@bbk.ac.uk)

## Executive Summary

1. Despite persistent disparities in business outcomes and other challenges, the economic contribution of ethnic minority entrepreneurs to the UK's Gross Value Added is estimated as £25 billion and 30% of ethnic minority businesses engage in product or service innovation (FSB 2020), thus showing ample economic potential. Accordingly, high on current UK national policy agenda is addressing the need for inclusivity and diversity in business innovation.
2. This report presents findings from two studies. The first was funded by the Regional Studies Association (202-2021). The second was an Impact Grant funded by Birkbeck's School of Economic Business and Informatics (2021). The aim of the first project is to achieve an extensive understanding of the geography of networks that support BAME and Disabled entrepreneurs and to position the analysis within the

context of UK and international policy agenda and actions. The study covered three phases. In the first, data were collected on networks & national initiatives and mapped by region in the UK. In the second, 60+ interviews with networks, entrepreneurs, universities, policy bodies including seventeen semi-structured interviews with BAME and Disabled Networks were conducted. The on-going third stage involves dissemination through reports and presentations to academic, policy and practitioner events. The second study assessed the reach and impact of the first.

3. With the original project funding and subsequent funding twelve YouTube videos have been produced and two further CIMR Debates in Public Policy in addition to two under the first grant were organised. Speakers, discussants, Chairs and participants included academics who have conducted research on BAME and disabled entrepreneurship, and practitioners and policymakers who have responsibilities for organising support for BAME and Disabled entrepreneurs. Further dissemination includes six presentations to academic and practitioner fora.
4. The results of the study helped to get a better understanding of the dynamics of entrepreneurial support in the BAME and disabled entrepreneurs' context. Based on the interviews we had with the practitioners and academics in the field, it was found that the BAME and Disabled Networks provide a wide range of services supporting their beneficiaries' personal and professional development, including their entrepreneurial skills. Some distinctive features of the networks included mentorship schemes, integration services and mental health support tailored to the needs of the target group. The main challenges for the networks identified were access to finance and disabled participants' accessibility to support services and locations.
5. Through events and interviews it was found that, in some cases, academics' engaged scholarship goes beyond communication and involves helping to design

practical support for people from BAME and Disabled communities. Conducting academic research within the area had problems, including communication barriers, the emotional impact of the research and being sensitive to use of language. Current researchers in the field mainly address the non-economic value of entrepreneurship for minority communities and the unique challenges these entrepreneurs face.

6. In light of the findings, recommendations are identified in order to reach a more inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem. These are the need for tailored solutions, financial support and effective communication of the impact of the networks. In addition, it is vital for policymakers to improve the legal structures for making self-employment a viable career option for minorities and establishing a national data collection system to be able to identify and address the strengths, challenges and needs of minority communities.

## **1. Background**

This report is based on feedback from participants in the Regional Studies Association research project: Addressing regional inequalities in support for BAME and disabled entrepreneurs (2020-2021). The aim throughout the project has been to achieve an extensive understanding of the geography of networks that support BAME and Disabled entrepreneurs and position the analysis within the context of UK and international policy agenda and actions. The results of this study provide evidence on the location, function and operation of specialist support networks.

The study has adopted an 'engaged scholarship' - defined as "sustained and continuous interaction between researchers and practitioners" (Ram et al., 2012) - approach to issues of regional equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in entrepreneurship and innovation. Both the study and its engagement are intended to inform thinking about

EDI policy and practice in innovation opportunities in professional bodies, government, Innovate UK, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This also translates into a series of policy recommendations. More information can be found on our research, supported by CIMR, addressing regional inequalities in innovation opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and disabled groups [on our web page](#).

The project follows on from a previous study for Innovate UK, the UK government's innovation agency (Vorley et al., 2019). It sought to identify the support available in the UK for disabled and Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) innovators. One its outcomes was the recognition that EDI policy and intervention are hampered by lack of evidence on the extent of the geography of networks which support BAME and disabled entrepreneurs, and how location facilitates or impedes ability to function.

The context is that increasingly people from under-represented sections of populations, including people with disabilities and from ethnically diverse communities, are turning to self-employment due to particular barriers to their job market participation and additional challenges posed by economic and social trends including the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. These populations contain potential or 'Missing entrepreneurs' (OECD 2021).

For example, for people with disabilities, the employment gap, i.e. the percentage of those not in work, increased by 0.7 percentage points in 2020, meaning that the employment rate of disabled people is 28.8 percent lower than that of people who are not disabled (Powell, 2021). Additionally, despite persistent disparities in business outcomes and the additional challenges concerning access to finance, education, business advice and knowledge faced by Black and Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs (British Business Bank and Oliver Wyman, 2020), the economic contribution of ethnic minority entrepreneurs to the UK's Gross Value Added is estimated as £25 billion and

30% of ethnic minority businesses engage in product or service innovation (FSB 2020). This shows ample economic potential. Other challenges highlighted in the literature for other potential entrepreneurs include gender gap, cost of doing business, and the likelihood of finding seed funding as common dominant factors reported on the issue of inclusion (Rolle et al., 2020).

Additionally, high on current UK national policy agenda is the need to address the need for inclusivity and diversity in business innovation. Amongst a series of actions taken are the creation of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and an APPG for BAME Business Owners in the UK. The government's 'levelling up agenda' seeks to broaden research and development so that it benefits every corner of the UK. Now is an opportune time for clear policy for increasing diversity and inclusion in innovation-led initiatives at the regional level to ensure that the levelling up agenda is inclusive.

## **2. Methodology**

The Regional Studies Association study had three phases. In the first data were collected on networks and national initiatives which were then mapped by region in the UK. In the second, 60+ interviews were conducted with networks, entrepreneurs, universities and policy bodies including seventeen semi-structured interviews with BAME and Disabled Networks (our stakeholders). Questionnaire data included information on the organisation, activities, local and regional engagement, evaluation of performance, sustainability, and policy recommendations. The on-going third stage involves dissemination through reports and presentations at academic, policy and practitioner events. Two project websites and a mailing list have been set up. Further funding from the School of Business, Economics and Informatics in the form of an Impact Grant in 2021 enabled the project team to be expanded and for the two research assistants to undertake further engagement with stakeholders.

Overall, within the original project funding and subsequent funding, twelve YouTube videos were produced and two further CIMR Debates in Public Policy (online events) were organised. Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 reference blogs and event details including information about speakers. These were in addition to another previously organised event during the course of the research ([bbk.ac.uk/cimr](http://bbk.ac.uk/cimr)) (July 2020). Speakers, discussants, chairs and participants included academics who have conducted research on BAME and disabled entrepreneurship and practitioners and policymakers who have responsibilities for organising support for BAME and Disabled entrepreneurs. Further dissemination has taken the form of six presentations to academic and practitioner fora.

In order to take forward what has been gained from the project, a series of interviews were conducted with participants in the research. In total, twelve people were interviewed: four academics in the BAME and disabled entrepreneurship field and eight practitioners from the networks supporting BAME and disabled entrepreneurs.

The interview questions for the practitioners concerned the services, distinctive features and challenges of their networks and beneficiaries (See Appendix 1). The questions for the academics covered their motivations, challenges, the major contribution of their work to the field, and suggestions for future research. For the analysis, the interview transcripts were coded and patterns detected that helped gain a better understanding on the dynamics of entrepreneurial support in the BAME and disabled entrepreneurs' contexts. The results are now discussed under three key themes from the interviews with the practitioners, and three themes from the interviews with the academics.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

#### **3.1. *Target groups and main activities of the support networks***

Out of eight interviewees from the support networks, five were from organisations that support disabled groups and three were from organisations that support BAME groups. Four out of eight organisations are providing a wide range of services supporting their beneficiaries' personal development, improving their professional skills, and facilitating their participation in the workforce, not only through entrepreneurship but also through helping them find waged jobs. For instance, an interviewee mentioned that their organisation has a career hive which provides career advice and shares career opportunities for people with disabilities.

An interviewee explained that they identify support and resources for their beneficiaries, help them to get better access to finance and business support that is tailored to their needs, as well as better access to the marketplace, contractors, etc. Another interviewee emphasised the importance of showing the members of minority communities how they can work with their unique strengths instead of being forced to work, think, and "look like" conventional entrepreneurs. Similarly, an interviewee said they are "highlighting the entrepreneurial creativity of the disabled community".

Finally, it is remarkable that one of the support networks provide consultancy for employers to make their company more inclusive and another one is organising networking events specifically for disabled people, non-disabled employers and business people to network and facilitate collaborations, job opportunities, etc.



### 3.2. ***Distinctive features of the support networks***

When asked for the distinctive features of their networks, six interviewees mentioned that they are founded or led by the community members for their target communities (e.g. 'by disabled for disabled'). Thus this has become a common practice of networks that provide tailored support specifically in these communities. It is worth keeping in mind that having founders, members and/or advisors from the target group helps to create better tailored services for the beneficiaries.

One interviewee stated that their organisation has a mentorship programme that has proven effective for entrepreneurial development of their beneficiaries. It is a good practice for other networks to also implement mentorship schemes in order to catalyse the starting up and growth processes of the ventures their beneficiaries create.

There is a wide range of distinctive features in the networks. For instance, one support network has services that include a wide range of activities, from integration services for asylum seekers, to help for ex-offenders get back into employment after their probation is over while also addressing their mental health issues. This organisation also started a food bank delivery project for minority communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another organisation has an education programme for 18–25-year-olds wanting to run their own business. Their programme includes visiting schools and teaching entrepreneurship to disabled students. These students can then come to the organisation and get further entrepreneurship support if they wish.

Only one participant's organisation was working at a macro level; looking at wider industrial strategy and the economy and demonstrating how minority business owners are an important part of the economy. This organisation distinctively works to make sure that policymakers recognise the contribution of minority business owners to the economy and the society, and makes sure that their needs are being met. Finally, an

inspiring and unique service mentioned by one interviewee was that of bringing people together to learn from each other within a peer group setting.

### 3.3. **Challenges of the support networks and entrepreneurs**

Six out of eight interviewees from the support networks mentioned that access to finance is a major challenge for their organisation and especially for entrepreneurs who benefit from their services. Lack of access to finance is exacerbated for minorities whose banking history track record is not in the country, as an interviewee pointed out. Giving individuals seed funding to test their talent, supporting them to utilise their competences and become economically self-sufficient, is vital in an inclusive entrepreneurship context.

Another challenge emphasised by the interviewees was accessibility - in terms of information, business tools, communication channels, recruitment processes, etc. for BAME and disabled groups. As a member from a support network for disabled communities said:

*“We have been using a webinar platform, which we have discovered is not accessible to people who are using screen readers, like blind people. Now we have to find another provider for that kind of things. So, accessibility is a huge issue.”*

Additionally, two interviewees said that self-belief is at the heart of challenges faced by the entrepreneurs they support. One said that is why they are trying to help disabled people realise their self-worth through having disabled mentors and role models in their network. Being unheard, the negative connotations, and service provision that is not tailored to their specific needs are factors hindering their self-belief and hope for success.

As also mentioned by a researcher who participated in our research, four interviewees from support networks flagged the lack of understanding of the need for tailored support for the minority groups. One of them stated:

*“People in conventional entrepreneurship networks would say ‘Why do we need that? We treat everyone the same. They can fairly join the competition in our ecosystem. Why should we treat them differently?’ People do not appreciate the additional and distinctive challenges that someone from a minority or disadvantaged community faces when starting up their own business. It is not about ‘Oh, poor you let’s help you to start a business.’ It is about recognising additional and distinctive challenges, evaluating people by keeping these challenges in mind and providing support through the process.”*

#### 3.4. **Motivations of the researchers**

It was observed during the interviews with academic participants that they all have a personal connection with the research area. This comes either through a close relationship with disabled people or through a volunteering/professional experience where they worked with the disabled. Three out of four researchers’ interest in the area stem from their earlier interest in investigating marginalised groups and diversity in entrepreneurship. One of the interviewees has a disabled family member. As an interviewee mentioned, they believe that working with this community brings value to their own lives and this is a vital point influencing their research motivations.

All the academics interviewed have been doing research in the disabled entrepreneurship field. Only one researcher has also engaged in research about minority communities and entrepreneurship. All interviewees mentioned that they noticed a big

gap in the literature about disabled entrepreneurs. To illustrate the potential in the field, one of the participants said:

*"If you have characteristics outside the conventional spectrum, there are many kinds of unique aspects to how you engage in entrepreneurship, and there is rich lived experience out there to explain them."*

Finally, it is worth highlighting that discrimination, restrictive business/legal settings, and lack of tailored support for unconventional entrepreneurs have been key areas of interest for the researchers. Therefore, the researchers are committed to bringing light on the challenges of these communities and creating entrepreneurship support models that empower them. For instance, one of the interviewees noticed during the economic boom in their country that not all groups were benefiting equally from that boom. Marginalized and minority communities were continuing to be disadvantaged and they wanted to do something about it. Their key skillset is entrepreneurship education and they thought that they could contribute to these communities by encouraging and enabling self-employment as a career option. They have researched the phenomena and designed entrepreneurial support schemes for minority entrepreneurs. Hence it is fair to say that the academics who participated in this study are seeking equity of treatment for disabled and BAME entrepreneurs.

### **3.5. Challenges of the researchers**

Researching the challenges has been very helpful in identifying the room for improvements in the practices of public and private sector in reaching a more inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem. Two of the major challenges mentioned by the interviewees were recruiting participants for surveys and interviews and access to data including secondary data due to the lack of a national data collection system. This was also raised by interviewees from the disabled and BAME communities.

Two out of four interviewees said that they struggle to communicate effectively with people with disabilities. This is because different disabilities (e.g. visual impairment, hearing disabilities) lead to different communication barriers. It was also noted that it is very difficult to get in touch with potential research participants from the disabled community. This obstacle can be exacerbated by the communication barrier. Additionally, a researcher mentioned that they were self-conscious as a non-disabled researcher wanting to talk about disability and worried in case the participants in their research would not feel comfortable.

Another challenge voiced by the researchers is the emotional impact of research. Listening to traumatic experiences, disappointments, and challenges of people with disabilities is a tough experience. Especially challenging is listening to the struggles of people who became disabled after having an accident and had to get used to their new identity as a disabled person.

Finally, the researchers also highlighted the challenge of learning more about disabled people and of using the right jargon. It is critical to know how to verbalize the issues related to people with disabilities more appropriately, so as not to interpret the experiences in a wrong way or express them poorly.

### 3.6. ***Researchers' contributions to the field***

Looking at how the interviewed researchers contribute to the inclusive entrepreneurship field, the key elements are (i) exploring the non-economic value of BAME and disabled entrepreneurship, (ii) providing insight into the experiences, entrepreneurial development and competencies of BAME and disabled entrepreneurs, (iii) portraying how the identity of disabled and minority entrepreneurs shapes their motivations and capacity to create ventures, and (iv) highlighting these unconventional entrepreneurs' lack of access to social and financial capital.

Specifically, two interviewees who collaborated in research on disabled entrepreneurship emphasised that their work shows how entrepreneurship gives disabled people a purpose in life, and that it also has psychological and social outcomes. The researchers also observed that entrepreneurs with disabilities mostly start up social businesses, aiming not to make millions but to create social impact. The results of their studies show that entrepreneurship also helps people from disadvantaged communities to become economically self-sufficient and not to rely on government support and welfare benefits.

One interviewee said that they contribute to the field and the community by designing, developing, and implementing customized training programmes for people from minority communities. Additionally, the researchers claimed that they see reflection of their work in national political agenda and that they value being part of the discussion, informing policies of inclusive entrepreneurship. They all believe that their work is a foundation for future research. Their recommendations for future research are discussed further below.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The research project examined the experiences of BAME and disabled entrepreneurs, practitioners from their support networks and researchers in the field. The subsequent follow-on project confirmed the initial finding that there is considerable expertise accessible online or in-person in different parts of the country to help both disabled and ethnically diverse entrepreneurs as well as other minority groups, in developing their businesses and/or entering employment. Often this involves tailored support.

The ongoing problem of sustained good practice being hampered by a lack of funding for the networks was raised. This means that providing tailored support, for example through mentoring to help people overcome a lack of self-confidence which requires more time and resources than group events, becomes more problematic. As more and

more business activities are online, challenges faced for people with disabilities to engage in digital media are more acute – for example blind people or people with limited hearing.

Academic researchers have an important role to play in identifying gaps in knowledge about issues facing disabled and ethnically diverse entrepreneurs. By engaging with these groups, a better understanding is shared with people in other organisations inside and outside academia, including practitioners. Researchers also act as intermediaries making links between people and organisations. They are advocates for change and the evidence that is collected in the studies provides legitimacy to recommendations. In some cases, academics' engaged scholarship goes beyond communication and involves helping design practical support for people from minority communities. Conducting academic research, however, is not without its own problems, including communication barriers, the emotional impact of the research and being sensitive to use of language.

Based on the findings from the follow-on project, the following recommendations are made for practitioners, policymakers and researchers in order to reach a more inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem on the basis of good practices identified by the interviewees. These are:

1. Making sure the services provided are customized for specific needs of the beneficiaries, as a one-size-fits-all approach would not be effective for these communities;
2. Communicating the impact of networks activities, including economic and social aspects while approaching investors and policymakers.

Recommendations for policymakers derived from the findings of research are:

1. Providing tailored financial support (i.e. grants, loans) for BAME and disabled entrepreneurs and support networks;
2. Improving the legal structures for making self-employment a viable career option for people from BAME and disabled groups;
3. Establishing a national data collection system to be able to identify and address the strengths, challenges and needs of minority communities.

As the researchers interviewed highlighted, the key themes that should be studied further are:

- Opportunity perception of BAME and disabled entrepreneurs, including how they recognize, perceive, and exploit opportunities;
- Non-economic value (i.e., social benefits, individual benefits) of BAME and disabled entrepreneurship;
- Knowledge production and entrepreneurial competencies of BAME and disabled entrepreneurs;
- Structural inequalities experienced by BAME and disabled entrepreneurs (i.e., the barriers they face in accessing market, accessing labour and accessing finance);
- How people from disadvantaged communities get out of welfare support or crime through entrepreneurship;
- The role of the welfare state in supporting disabled and BAME entrepreneurs;
- Effects of customized entrepreneurship training and education for minority communities;
- Entrepreneurial experiences of ex-offenders, travellers, seniors and other minority communities.



## 5. References

British Business Bank & Wyman, O. (2020). Alone, Together: Entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK. <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Alone-together-Entrepreneurship-and-diversity-in-the-UK-FINAL.pdf>

FSB (2020) Unlocking opportunity: The value of ethnic minority firms to UK economic activity and enterprise. Unlocking Opportunity [Unlocking Opportunity | FSB, The Federation of Small Businesses](#) The report was authored by Richard Roberts, Monder Ram, Trevor Jones and Bochra Idris on behalf of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME). Mark Hart, Anastasia Ri and Neha Prashar on behalf Enterprise Research Centre (ERC).

OECD (2021) [The Missing Entrepreneurs 2021: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment | en | OECD](#)

Powell, A. (2021). House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: Number 7540, 24 May 2021: Disabled people in employment. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7540/CBP-7540.pdf>

Ram, M Trhan, K Rouse, J, Woldesenbet, K and Jones, T (2012) Ethnic Minority Businesses in the West Midlands: Challenges and developments Environment and Planning C 30, 504-519

Ram, M. (2019). The Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship: A Vehicle for Critical Engagement. In M. Czaika, L. Rossl, F. Altenburg, T. Pfeffer (Eds.) Migration & Integration 8: Dialog zwischen Politik, Wissenschaft und Praxis, Krams: Donau Universität Krams

Rolle, J., Kisato, J., Rock, P., & Winstanley, J. (2020). Inclusive entrepreneurship: A critical look at the inclusion of persons with disabilities. *International Journal of Business and Economic Development*, 8(02). <https://www.ijbed.org/issues&iid=22>

Vorley, T., Lawton Smith, T., Coogan, T., Owalla, B., Wing, K. (2019) Supporting Diversity and Inclusion In Innovation. Innovation Caucus.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/902986/InnovateUK\\_Supporting\\_Diversity\\_and\\_Inclusion\\_in\\_innovation\\_WEB\\_VERSION.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902986/InnovateUK_Supporting_Diversity_and_Inclusion_in_innovation_WEB_VERSION.pdf)

## **Appendix 1: Interview Questions**

Questions for the practitioners/entrepreneurs from BAME and disabled entrepreneurship networks:

1. What does your organization do? (Target group and main activities)
2. What are the distinctive features of your organisation?
3. What are the main challenges facing you and your members?

Questions for the academics:

1. What motivated your interest in this topic?
2. What is the major contribution of your research in the BAME/disability research area?
3. What were the challenges of doing research in this field?
4. What do you think future research should address in this area?

## Appendix 2

Project video series on CIMR's YouTube channels: links to the videos:

### Researching BAME and Disabled Entrepreneurship:

- 3 [https://youtu.be/v15Rwvx\\_2BE](https://youtu.be/v15Rwvx_2BE) - Professor Thomas Cooney, Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)
- 4 <https://youtu.be/J55xj-c1cf4> - Dr Te Klangboonkrong, Senior Lecturer at De Montfort University
- 5 <https://youtu.be/RJPs-WBTEsA> - Dr Eva Kasperova, Research Fellow at CREME, Aston University
- 6 [https://youtu.be/b5\\_1Hfyjec](https://youtu.be/b5_1Hfyjec) - Dr Ning Baines, Lecturer at De Montfort University

### Supporting and Inspiring BAME and Disabled Entrepreneurship:

6. <https://youtu.be/5sNbIMnVi9E> - Philip Connolly, Founder of Disability Resilience Network
7. <https://youtu.be/eYBFGa54x2M> - Jabo Butera, Managing Director at Diversity Business Incubator
8. <https://youtu.be/Y-jFAan9mMU> - Sam Everard, Chief Executive at Support and Mentoring Enabling Entrepreneurship (SAMEE)
9. <https://youtu.be/ATk2Kt-krE8> - Diana Crouch, Advisor at APPG for BAME Business Owners
10. <https://youtu.be/NL3swEe5FFeO> - Jane Hatton, Director at Evenbreak
11. <https://youtu.be/U2t3o1OpuiM> - Kimberley Mamhende, Safeguarding Officer & Relationship Manager at The Centre for African Entrepreneurship (CAE)
12. <https://youtu.be/CLwbXvobeC4> - Jack Pridmore, CEO at The Accessful Foundation

<https://youtu.be/nV19phkyC64> - Piers Roberts, Creative Entrepreneur & Neurodiversity advocate

### **Appendix 3: CIMR Events on Disabled and BAME Entrepreneurship**

Two events organised under the BEI School Impact Grant brought together practitioners, policymakers, entrepreneurs and academics in the field to discuss opportunities and challenges for inclusive entrepreneurship.

The first event was 'Unlocking the potential of disabled entrepreneurs'. The event tackled the motivations and challenges of disabled entrepreneurs and support networks they benefit from. In addition, the speakers and audience engaged in a critical discussion on the needs of the community and how policymakers and practitioners should be informed for creating a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Here is a thorough blog piece about the event published on CIMR website:

<http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/cimr/2021/09/24/unlocking-the-potential-of-disabled-entrepreneurs/>



CIMR Debates in Public Policy

Unlocking the Potential of Disabled Entrepreneurs

Date: 22nd September 2021 14:00-15:30

Speakers: David Walsh, Dr Eva Kašperová, Beth Kume-Holland, David Halabisky

Chair: Jacqueline Winstanley

### Abstract of the event

More people from underserved communities, the likes of persons with disabilities, are turning into self-employment due to particular barriers to their job market participation and additional challenges posed by economic and social trends including the effects of the pandemic. The disability employment gap has increased by 0.7 percentage points in 2020, meaning that the employment rate of disabled people is 28.8 percent lower than that of people who are not disabled. Other challenges highlighted in the literature included gender gap, cost of doing business, and the likelihood to find seed fund as common dominant factors reported on the issue of inclusion.

Additionally, high on the current national policy agenda are inclusivity and diversity challenges in business innovation leading to the creation of an All Party Parliamentary Group for Inclusive Entrepreneurship. A report published by Innovate UK in 2019 identified the barriers, challenges, opportunities and support needs for minority ethnic groups and disabled people to participate in business innovation. The government's 'levelling up agenda' seeks to level up research and development so that it benefits every corner of the UK. Now is an opportune time for clear policy rationale for increasing diversity and inclusion in innovation-led initiatives at the regional level to ensure that the levelling up agenda is inclusive in practice.

Through this event, our aim is to challenge the audience's understanding on the self-employment of disabled people, and to call the policymakers, practitioners and academics to go beyond what is currently available for supporting disabled entrepreneurs and innovators, and tackling the issues affecting their successful participation in the ecosystem.

This event will debate the key issues:

- What is leading disabled people to entrepreneurship?

- What are the challenges faced by disabled entrepreneurs and relevant support networks?
- What kind of support is available and needed for disabled entrepreneurs in the UK?
- What needs to change in current policies affecting these communities?

You can find more information on our research, supported by CIMR, addressing regional inequalities in innovation opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and disabled groups: <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/making-business-innovation-accessible-to-diverse-groups>

## Bios

Speaker 1: David Walsh, Managing Partner of Flamefinch Partners LLP



David is Managing Partner of Flamefinch Partners LLP, Chairman of Supernotes (a leading collaborative learning solution), and Chairman of the Malta Business Network (UK). In 1996, he founded Crimsonwing, an international software company that grew to a business of 500 staff across Europe before being acquired by KPMG. Past Chair roles include Thrive Partners and Level Global. David is King's College London's Entrepreneur in Residence at King's Entrepreneurial Institute. David funds the David Walsh Awards at King's to recognise excellence in entrepreneurship. David was the winner of the Helen Hudson Award, King's Alumni of the Year, 2020, and was awarded a Fellowship of King's College in 2021.

Speaker 2: Dr Eva Kašperová, Research Fellow at CREME, Aston Business School



Eva Kašperová is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME), Aston Business School, with interest in inclusive entrepreneurship and enterprise policy and support. Eva's doctoral research looked at the experiences of disabled people and those with long-term health conditions of starting and running a business in the UK. Eva has published in journals such as the International Small Business Journal and the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Prior to joining CREME, Eva was a Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University and a Research Assistant at Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University London.

Speaker 3: Beth Kume-Holland, Founder of Patchwork Hub and MOKOM



Beth Kume-Holland is the founder of Patchwork Hub and MOKOM. She is a Harvard University Kennedy Scholar, an Oxford University graduate and an international disability rights advocate. Beth's previous roles include Citibank's thought-leadership team for their 'Global Perspectives & Solutions' series, Unilever and as a Research Fellow at Oxford University. She recently worked as Audience and Market Insight Lead at Scope, the UK disability charity but is now the founder and director of MOKOM and the award-winning tech startup and social enterprise, Patchwork Hub.

Speaker 4: David Halabisky, Economist in the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship





David Halabisky is an economist in the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities. He currently works on several projects related to entrepreneurship policy, including a multi-year project on inclusive entrepreneurship. He is the main author of the “Missing Entrepreneurs” reports.

Chair: Jacqueline Winstanley, Founder & CEO, Universal Inclusion and The Inclusive Entrepreneur



Jacqueline Winstanley FRSA is the Founder and CEO of Universal Inclusion and [The Inclusive Entrepreneur Network](#). She holds a series of directorships and advisory roles in businesses and organisations including: Secretariat to the [All Party Parliamentary Group for Inclusive Entrepreneurship](#), Advisory Board Chair: Ability Today, Chair: Foundation for Independent Living Trust, Advisory Board Member: New England Sports for Women. She is a former trustee of the DRUK Disability Rights UK, Shaw Trust Power 100 List Judge 2021, Virgin StartUp Mentor and she is a visiting fellow at Centre of Innovation Management Research (CIMR), Birkbeck.

### Appendix 3: BAME Entrepreneurs Event Details

The second event was “Unlocking the Potential of Black and Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs”. The event debated key issues like the factors leading Black and Ethnic minorities to entrepreneurship, available support for them in the UK, the challenges faced by Black and Ethnic minority entrepreneurs and relevant support networks, and the limitations of current policies affecting these communities. We also published a comprehensive blog reflecting on the event: <http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/cimr/2021/10/18/unlocking-the-potential-of-black-and-ethnic-minority-entrepreneurs/>



#### **CIMR Debates in Public Policy**

#### **Unlocking the Potential of Black and Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs**

Date: 13th October 2021 13:00-14:30

Speakers: Professor Helen Lawton Smith, Jabo Butera, Sharniya Ferdinand

Discussants: Brenda King, Yemi Jackson, Kimberley Mamhende

Chair: Professor Monder Ram

Abstract of the event

More people from underserved communities, the likes of ethnic minority groups, are turning into self-employment due to particular barriers to their job market participation and economic and social trends including the effects of the pandemic. Despite persistent disparities in business outcomes and the additional challenges to access to finance, education, business advice and knowledge faced by Black and Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurs (British Business Bank and Oliver Wyman, 2020), the economic contribution of ethnic minority entrepreneurs to the UK's Gross Value Added is estimated as £25 billion and 30% of ethnic minority businesses engage in product or service innovation, (CREME, 2020), showing ample potential.

Additionally, high on the current national policy agenda are inclusivity and diversity challenges in business innovation leading to the creation of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for BAME Business Owners. A report published by Innovate UK in 2019 identified the barriers, challenges, opportunities and support needs for minority ethnic groups and disabled people to participate in business innovation (Vorley et al., 2019). The government's 'levelling up agenda' seeks to level up research and development so that it benefits every corner of the UK. In this regard, the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship's (CREME) work that engages state agencies, practitioners and a variety of non-academic stakeholders exemplifies research that can generate actionable knowledge in the field (Ram, 2019). Now is an opportune time for a clear policy rationale for increasing diversity and inclusion in innovation-led initiatives at the regional level to ensure that the levelling up agenda is inclusive in practice.

Through this event, our aim is to challenge the audience's understanding on the self-employment of Black and Ethnic Minorities, and to call the policymakers, practitioners and academics to go beyond what is currently available for supporting Black and Ethnic Minority entrepreneurs and innovators, and tackling the issues affecting their successful participation in the ecosystem.

This event will debate the key issues:

- What is leading Black and Ethnic minorities to entrepreneurship?
- What are the challenges faced by Black and Ethnic minority entrepreneurs and relevant support networks?
- What kind of support is available and needed for Black and Ethnic minority entrepreneurs in the UK?
- What needs to change in current policies affecting these communities?

You can find more information on our research, supported by CIMR, addressing regional inequalities in innovation opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and disabled groups: <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/making-business-innovation-accessible-to-diverse-groups>

## Bios

Speaker 1: Professor Helen Lawton Smith, CIMR, Birkbeck, University of London



Helen Lawton Smith is Professor of Entrepreneurship, Department of Management, Birkbeck, University of London. She is the Director of the Centre for Innovation Management Research ([bbk.ac.uk/cimr](http://bbk.ac.uk/cimr)). She is the Founder and Research Director of the Oxfordshire Economic Observatory, School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford University (<http://oeo.geog.ox.ac.uk>). Her research focuses on geographies of innovation. Her current research on 'Addressing regional inequalities in innovation opportunities for BAME and disabled groups' is funded by the Regional Studies Association.

Speaker 2: Jabo Butera, Co-founder & Managing Director of DBI



Jabo Butera is the co-founder and Managing Director of DBI (Diversity Business Incubator), a business hub based in Plymouth. DBI is a community-interest company founded to help to elevate business success in the minority communities and reduce the economic disparities within these communities. Jabo is equipped with extensive

experience in community building with over 6 years as a board member and trustee of The South Yorkshire African Caribbean Business Centre, a Trustee of Pop+ and chair of the Ras Network, an Independent Advisor to the Devon and Cornwall Police and is on the Policy Advisory Board on South West Business Council as well as Regional Director of the British African Business Alliance and the African Business Chamber of Commerce. Jabo has owned and runs successful businesses in South Yorkshire and globally and is an active member of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities community (BAME) in the region.

Speaker 3: Sharniya Ferdinand, Enterprise Manager at NatWest Group



Sharniya has worked for NatWest for almost a decade, with experience spanning Personal and Commercial Banking. Previous roles involved her supporting customers with their financial needs and hosting educational business events to encourage them growth and businesses to exceed their expectations. In 2017 Sharniya was awarded the RBS Group Women's Opal award recognising her contribution to female entrepreneurs. In 2019 Sharniya was recognised as a Rising Star in Diversity by We Are The City. In her current role Sharniya manages a customer led strategic programme of inclusion activities for clients. Sharniya holds a BSc (Hons) in Psychology and a Masters in Events and Exhibitions Management.

Discussant 1: Brenda King



Brenda has been a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, a consultative body that gives representatives of Europe's civil society, including the private sector, a formal platform to contribute to EU legislation and policy. She has held a number of leadership positions within the Committee especially in the area of development cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), chairing its EU-ACP subcommittee from 2010 to 2013. Her success in getting young people from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds into further education and valued apprenticeships resulted in her receiving national recognition for her pioneering work with an MBE awarded by the Queen.

Discussant 2: Yemi Jackson, CEO and Founder of Engage Transform



Yemi Jackson is the CEO and Founder of Engage Transform. A talent acquisition and development company with the mission of increasing the placements of women and BAME talent in senior positions in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Yemi was Senior Executive in Finance and IT before setting up Engage Transform to counter the critical need for a more engaged and diverse workplace that begins with sourcing the right candidates. Yemi has worked across Retail (Sainsburys, Kingfisher) & Logistics (SSP Group), Housing (Peabody, Network Homes) and Education sectors (GEMS Education).

Discussant 3: Kimberley Mamhende



Kim is the Business Development Manager at The Centre for African Entrepreneurship (The CAE), a charity based in Swansea. The CAE aims to fill in the gap in provision seen in BAME communities, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, inspiring and empowering these groups to succeed through enterprise. Over the past few years, Kim has led the successful implementation of youth entrepreneurship projects, resulting in over 100 young aspiring entrepreneurs being empowered in their journeys. As an advocate and driver of change, Kim is part of the National Lottery Community Fund Wales Young People in The Lead Advisory Panel, and in the past has informed policy-making under the financial education workstream of the Bank of England.

Chair: Professor Monder Ram OBE, Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME)



Professor Monder Ram OBE is the Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME). He is a leading authority on small business and ethnic minority entrepreneurship research and has published widely on the subject, and has

extensive experience of working in and acting as a consultant to small and ethnic minority businesses. Monder is a regular keynote speaker at international conferences, and advises the government on the importance and value of ethnic minority businesses through his position on the APPG for BAME Business Owners. He also holds visiting positions at Warwick University and the University of Turku.