



Charity No: 1152486 | Company No: 06709767

Forum: Minority Ethnic Communities in Innovation

Date: Wednesday 10th January 2024

Time: 10 am – 11:30 am

Location: Zoom

Number of Attendees: 78

Key Speakers/Panellists:

Akmal Hanuk - Founder and CEO, Assadaqaat Community Finance UK

Patricia Mawuli Porter - Founding Director, Metal Seagulls Ltd and Fafali Aircraft

Dr Sofia Vougioukalou - Research Fellow, Centre for Adult Social Care Research

Abi Phillips - Head of Innovation, Welsh Government

EYST:

Jainaba Conteh (host) – Policy Officer

Selima Bahadur (co-host) – Programme Manager

Twahida Akbar (tech) – Policy Officer

Opening Statement from Jainaba Conteh

JC: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our forum on minority ethnic communities in innovation. My name is Jainaba, and I am one of the policy offices for the All-Wales engagement programme here at EYST. So as a society, we are all aware of the importance of diversity and inclusivity. However, there is so much work to be done to ensure that we are providing equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their ethnicity or background. And this forum is an important step towards achieving that goal. We believe that innovation is a key driver of economic growth and social progress, and by promoting diversity in innovation, we can tap into a wider range of perspectives and ideas, which will ultimately lead to better outcomes for everyone. It is our hope that this forum will encourage more individuals from ethnic minority communities to be innovative, but also for opportunities to be created and doors to be opened to allow ethnic minority individuals to be innovative. We are excited to hear from a variety of speakers, including experts, from the public, private, and third sectors. They will share their experiences and insights on how to promote diversity in innovation, as well as strategies for overcoming the challenges that may arise. Obviously, we can't cover all areas. But we wanted insights ranging from business to social, because innovation can look different in different areas. Innovation is not just invention but is a new technology process business model that creates value. We also hope that the Forum will provide a platform for networking and collaboration between attendees, who can share their own ideas and learn from others. So, this Forum on promoting diversity in innovation, is an important opportunity to advance social, economic, and environmental progress in Wales. We look forward to



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welcoming you to the conversation and working together towards a more inclusive and innovative future.

Panel Members Introduction

JC: We'll pass it over to the panel members to introduce themselves. Patricia Mawuli Porter could not be here today, but she has graciously sent us her video interview. We have Akmal Hanuk, Dr. Sofia Vougioukalou and Abi Philips. I'm passing it over to Akmal Hanuk to introduce himself.

AK: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. [Akmal gives a prayer] thank you so much Selima and thank you Jainaba. Thank you everyone for taking this time out to attend this session, which is very close to my heart. And the work and the vision that I have for creating innovative new products and services which the ethnic minority communities have the capability to do it, but they are looking for opportunities. So, I was very privileged and humbled to be asked to speak about some of the innovation that we have done in the financial sector, and I'll be more than happy to share with you. By way of introduction, I come from the corporate sector. Looking at national and international development and business. I'm also teaching business, international business strategy and corporate governance at the Cardiff Business School, and I'm also one of the board members for the Cardiff and Vale Health Board. So, it gives me quite a bit of a reach to understand the systems, both in the public, private and the corporate sector, and equally to give me to the opportunity to apply my knowledge and experience in developing something more innovative very much focused on the black and minority ethnic communities, but not limited to them. So I'm very privileged today, humble today to be able to share some of my thoughts which I will. But by way of introduction, it has been a great opportunity that we can discuss innovation and inclusivity, which is, I think, goes along with it. To be able to help our communities to think about innovation and bring something new to the society addressing some of the national or regional or even global challenges that we have. But again, thank you so much, and looking forward to the event today.

SV: Thank you very much for this invitation to speak in the on this very important topic. I'm a research fellow working in Cardiff University, and I've lived in work in Wales for the last 10 years my work has always focused on patient experience and service user experience and how to particularly make specific care pathways more culturally sensitive and increase the uptake and the enjoyment of receiving care for all groups of service users. I worked on different chronic conditions specifically for older adults and these include cancer, dementia, Huntington's disease, macular degeneration. I'm currently moving on to social care and I'm working in our newly established centre for adult social care research, where we will try and tackle some of the most pressing issues in social care, and something I've really enjoyed about working in Wales is that I think there are a lot of connections between the Welsh government, the universities, and the third sector, because there is a shared sense of purpose. You know that we want to improve things for Welsh citizens, and I think that's really nice as well. So, specifically, regarding social care, we very much also look forward to receiving ideas from the audience, from friends and family of the audience, who are in touch with social services, who



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have unmet needs from social services so that we can work together. I've noted before coming to this webinar, that the Wales innovates strategy document about creating a stronger and fairer Wales has a particular item under the health and wellbeing mission, which says that a strong focus is to enable people to stay in their home safely for longer and reduce the time to discharge to home care, and within that work, with local government to decrease delayed transfers of care. So that's an area we would particularly be interested to hear from people as will be working on that in the future.

AP: Good morning everyone, and thank you for the invitation to come here today to speak to you all. My name's Abi Phillips. I'm currently the head of innovation within Welsh Government's Economy Department, responsible for the Wales Innovates strategy that Sophia just mentioned. So, a good plug there? My responsibility spans a range of areas in Welsh government. So, looking at how we deliver the missions that are set out within the Wales Innovates strategy but also the sort of broader challenges that we have in Wales where innovation can act as a policy tool to deliver against those. For those of you who've had an opportunity to look at the Wales Innovates strategy, you'll see that equality and diversity is written largely throughout it. It is a very strong theme, not only from a demographic perspective, but also from a regional perspective. So, we heard a lot during our stakeholder engagement and our consultation from people across all sectors, all regions, from all backgrounds about how they viewed innovation in Wales and what they would like to see. And we've attempted to build that into the strategy and into the delivery plan. And now we're very much in delivery mode and looking at opportunities as to how we can improve the offer that we have where we need to point innovation to support the citizens right the way throughout Wales. So interested to hear your thoughts on that and I'll cover some of the things that we're also doing later on. By way of some background, I used to work in health innovation within Welsh government and have sat on several programme boards and sort of being involved in direct delivery of projects there, as well as sort of developing policy and programmes for delivery as well. And I'm also a volunteer. So, I sit on the committee of a local football club in quite a deprived area of South Wales and championing equality and diversity through that organization as well. So, thanks for inviting me today and look forward to the discussion.

JC: So, as previously mentioned, Patricia Mawuli-Porter could not join us today, but she has sent us her video interview. And we'll just play her introduction for everyone. She will be talking about innovation within the aerospace engineering sector.

PM: Hi Shwmae. My name is Patricia Mawuli Porter. I come from Ghana in West Africa. How did I come to be? Yes, I was born in Ghana in a rural community of fishing, farming, and trading. But I grew up without means of water, no electricity, and no telecommunication. Yes, that's how I grew up. And I normally tell people, if you survived an African, an adult, it's actually quite a miracle because of the conditions in which we grew up in. Well, I went to a small school where it was normal to not actually have a birth certificate. Yes, we studied with oil lamps and fires just to have light to be able to study with. But with all those odds, so I decided I'll go into the bush and cut some trees to sell for money. Whilst I was doing that, I saw a small plane flying overhead. I was really petrified because growing up, we never got to see



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any airplanes close up. So, although I was scared, I wanted to find out more. So, I walked through the bush into an airfield where I asked for a job and I was told, well, go away because there are no job opportunities for women in this industry here in the bush of Africa. So, I said, I'll work for free. I'll tell you what, that did change their perception, before long I was put onto the payroll, and I was offered an apprenticeship. The best thing that ever happened to me. I went on, not only to now clean around aeroplanes and be happy being around them. But did you know? I actually got to learn to build aeroplanes, service aeroplanes, in fact, work on engines to actually get to know about the inner workings of engines. With that all being said, whilst I was doing this, I saw the need to not only keep the knowledge to myself, but to encourage other young people to do what I do. Because I always believed, I can do all the jobs. If I train more people, then perhaps I'm making the world a better place. I then went on to learn to fly and became an assistant flying instructor in Ghana. This was a good thing, because now I was getting a message across. You know how I started being told that there is no job opportunity for women in that industry, now I was actually there changing this perception and giving this opportunity to other young people. I went on not only did I fly for pleasure or learn to fly and teach other people, I also saw the need to take health education materials to other people who didn't have infrastructure, who were far away from any infrastructure. So, taking health educational material to them to help educate them. In 2015, however, we evacuated Ghana, we came to the United Kingdom. I also again saw the need to be able to train other young people and extend that opportunity onto people of different background. Because I believe everybody needs to be given opportunity in life. It doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, it doesn't matter the colour of your skin, everybody needs opportunities. So, then our company Metal Seagulls was formed. That's why I became the founding director of Metal Seagulls.

Q&A

PM: But what are Metal Seagulls? What do they do? Well, Metal Seagulls is a thriving company in the non-part 21 sector of aviation. We do a number of things. We represent a number of companies here in the UK. When people want to build an aeroplane, they need a company, or they need somebody with the expertise to be able to give them good advice, and we pride ourselves very much on good service. So not only do we sell the kits, but we also give them tech support and other support. We troubleshoot them should any need arise. We can go from designing a small part to go on a small airplane. But then at any minute, we can be troubleshooting on making some of these airplanes run smoothly.

PM: So where is our service area? Well, our service area goes as far north as Iceland, as far south as the Falkland Island and then to the West California. and then to the East Australia. So you see, we don't only sell to the UK. And again, it comes to that pride. Your services are needed all over the world, not just in the UK, for instance.

PM: So then, what do we do daily? We inspect people's airplanes; we call them annuals. So, every year every aircraft needs to be checked by a qualified inspector to make sure the plane is good to fly for a year. We also inspect people's airplanes when they are building them. So,



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build stages. We also design parts, custom made parts with our machines. We are about the only company in the UK with our capabilities. So, we make parts for people building aeroplanes all over the world like I already said. But in the UK, did you know there are 80 aeroplanes that are going to be built every year in this country. Of those 80, we at least make a tiny little part for all of them. Metal Seagulls, we can go from making a small part that goes on an airplane to a fully ready to fly airplanes. With Metal Seagulls, we pride ourselves very much on making sure our customers are happy. So, with decarbonization as we know it, decarbonization of our skies is going to be a much bigger job, as we all think. We are currently in the phase of designing our own aircraft, which is Next Gen. We try to describe, just to put into perspective for most people, that the aircraft is energy source and power plant agnostic, meaning with today's technologies, although we are not ready for fully electric aircraft because the battery life is just not there, it's ready with that capabilities that as we go on to the future, as technologies develop, we are ready to integrate other power plants and energy sources into our aircraft. That's a little snippet about what Metal Seagulls, here in the UK based at Haverfordwest Airport does.

JC: Thank you, Patricia? I believe she covered many parts of the innovation strategy, we've got environment, health education, and technological. So, the structure of today's forum is that we are going to ask the panel members questions for the first half and for the remaining second half, we'll pass it over to the audience to ask questions to the panel members.

JC: So, the first question is for Akmal. Mainstream public sector business support is rarely used by minority ethnic communities. ACF your organisation aims to offer an innovative alternative to the current system of business support. Please describe the journey of innovation behind your financial model.

AH: Right? Thank you, Jainaba. And it was good to listen to the other panel members. I think, as you rightly described, it's a journey. And my journey to reach to this point started with my work in the international sector where I was working for a very large organisation, a corporate organisation in Switzerland, in Zurich. I was looking after 19 countries. Now, any country or any capital that I went, I always found that there's a divide in the city. There are 2 very divided sections in the sense of affluency or privilege. There was a very affluent area and there was a not very affluent area. I was always wondering that what can we do to be able to help the people to enjoy some of the privileges or some of the opportunities that people may have to be able to sustain themselves and raise their standards and do something much more meaningful. And to that end my thinking was that if we can help people to get into entrepreneurship, so that they can empower themselves financially. I think that that would be a good way to help people so that we don't give them the fish but help them and teach them how to fish. And with that in mind, it was a very important area for me to look at the entrepreneurship side of things. And how we can get people from less privileged backgrounds to be able to access some of the opportunities that others have who are privileged people in our societies. So that was the beginning and when I started looking at entrepreneurship, I



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found that there are number of barriers which people have and especially when it comes to ethnic minority communities. And these are people with talent, with skill, with education but it is the societal and the structural issues within the financial system which inhibit their growth or their expansion or getting their ideas into reality. So, I started looking at the financial sector very carefully in terms of understanding where the points were, which were the barriers. So, we knew that there were some skills that are required, the skills and education and training advice, mentoring all of that was required, which is fine, and a lot of the people were giving this kind of training as well the soft training, as we call it. But the biggest issue I found was in terms of access to finance.

There were 3 key areas that I found in that journey which were, firstly, the eligibility criteria. When we looked at the financial institutions. When you look at the High Street banks for example, they have got eligibility criteria which is very difficult to be met by the ethnic minority communities because they may not have a good credit history. Maybe they don't have a bank account. Whatever the reason may be, because in the initial years there was a lot of postcode exclusion as well. So, when we're looking at the deprived parts of the city or the deprived parts of the country, or even our society, to make it as a pool, we find that there is no chance that these people can actually get any financial support. So that's the first thing, that they just can't meet that eligibility criteria. The second part, which was also very important was the interest factor because of the value proposition. Some of the people would do it for ethical reasons, but some of the people do not believe that interest is ethical. Some of the people believed it for the religious or cultural or social values, and were not very happy with the interest, but overall interest became very exploitative in that sense. So that was something which was very much in my mind, how can we develop something which does not have the interest. And the third part was the feeling of getting into debt. When we are talking about micro and small and medium enterprise organisations, they find especially with women and young people, that they wouldn't like to get into debt, especially at the time when they're not certain whether this thing is going to go as planned, or it can be a shift. But of course, you know at that time they have actually signed up something which is really very daunting on them, and they don't feel that debt would be something that they can really cope with, and that became a barrier. With these 3 things that in mind, I innovated the whole ACF, the Sadaqat community finance financial model which we call it the ACF cycle of shared prosperity. The idea was to connect the haves of the society to the have-nots, through a secured platform, through a certain due diligence, KYC principles electronically, digitally. Just as we would go to a bank, they would do the same thing. But my ethos was different. My innovation was different, because I found one of the instruments that's philanthropy or generosity which has never been used as an instrument of finance. We all give to different causes, but never has this been used as an instrument for helping the people to start their finance on interest-free basis. So that was the innovation which I feel we did. And we worked quite a lot on this. I did my financial modelling, the business studies, the surveys, everything. We founded the organisation in 2017, and since then we have reached more than about 2,500 people. We have really helped the people, especially the women from black and minority ethnic communities to start up their businesses. Helping them to get that tailored support, interest free finance, advice and mentoring. And the main thing that this model does is to transform the beneficiaries of today into benefactors of tomorrow. So that is that innovation that was



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recognized by Oxford University side Business School as a social and economic model. We term ourselves as disruptive innovators. Because we innovated, and we stick very much to the theory of Disruptive innovation. This was theory Put forward by Harvard University, Professor Christensen. In fact, I remember you wrote a book called Innovator's Dilemma and it is when I look at that, and I just remembered it now while I'm talking, I feel that as a as an organisation, and when we call ourselves disruptive innovators, I think it is exactly in the classic definition. The theory is basically talking about how smaller companies with limited resources can challenge the established businesses by introducing innovations that initially, may not appeal to the mainstream market, but actually and eventually they redefine the industry. My hope in this innovation in the financial sector is that we will be adopting and adapting more ethical principles and products, looking out for the community, be compassionate about it, have empathy about it, have an understanding of the cultural sensitivity that we have. And not only have just a transactional relationship, it's important that we have an individual very much a relation based on trust, which is a relational relationship that we have got. ACF is basically disruptive innovator, which is really looking at very much the affordability side of the people, focusing on the entrepreneur and the individual, and how we can do that, and really making an impact on the individual, social, societal, and economic impact. And that is the matrix that we have developed for ourselves. So, I believe that there are lots of people in the ethnic minority communities who have wonderful, brilliant ideas but they do not have pathways to be able to express themselves. I know this journey has been hard for me. There has been lots of challenges. Lots of the times when I was thinking, what am I going into? How did I start? What did I do? But I was meeting people in whose lives we made a difference. This was something that was the oxygen that really kept us going. And today we are scaling up internationally as well. So, I can talk about that in my next session. But thank you so much, I hope I've just given you an overview as to what you know ACF does and what was my journey?

JC: Thank you very much Akmal. Certainly, the fear of going into debt is a massive barrier and the uncertainty of starting something new. But I like that you mentioned Christensen because I read his books 'The Prosperity Paradox', and that was one of the reasons why I was also interested in this topic. So, thank you very much. I'll pass it onto Selima.

SB: Thank you, Jainaba and brother Akmal, it's good to hear that. And disruptive innovation that's given us all something to think about. So the next question is to the lovely Sofia. Sofia, innovation is often associated with technological advancements rather than social innovation and innovative products are prioritized over innovative service delivery. So similarly to that, economic value is often prioritized over social value. So, is this true in your line of work? And why is it important to value social innovation?

SV: I think social innovation really is the key to solving a lot of issues that are experienced in health and social care and also looking beyond, established models. For example, recent developments in arts and health and harnessing the therapeutic power of creative engagement, understanding the different ways that creative engagement can improve our health even when people aren't calling it like that. For example, creative engagement can be embedded in religious practice in cultural practice, in entrepreneurial practice. And what



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we've seen now with social prescribing is the upscale of a lot of the social innovations to enable people to stay healthier in their communities. So, a lot of the work that we've done particularly when I used to work at Y Lab, which was the public Services innovation unit was looking at how creativity can be embedded in existing practice and generate value as a form of social innovation. Specifically, in the field of dementia, we looked at the specific engagement needs of ethnic minority communities in Cardiff, and we deliver this work in collaboration with Diverse Cymru and the great work that, as Suzanne Duval has done, and Alzheimer's society with Sarah McKee, and we developed a set of recommendations for the different ways that specifically, carers of people with dementia can be approached and meaningfully engaged, and interrupt a patterns of disengagement from health services for this very sensitive and neurodegenerative condition. And I'll put a link in the chat to a document that outline some of this work.

SB: Thank you, Sofia and Jainaba, over to you now.

JC: Thank you very much, Sofia. My next question is for Abi. So, there is the absence of reliable data on innovation among different ethnic groups, which then makes it very difficult to understand the disparities experienced by ethnic minorities. What do you believe is the reason for this data gap? And how can it be addressed?

AP: Thanks, Jainaba. So, speaking from my experience of developing the innovation strategy when we came to do things like the impact assessment, and we were looking for data on innovation, we've got some data. But unfortunately, I think the reliance on European funding, so ERDF funding that was used to fund innovation meant that we collected the data that was required to service those programmes. And a lot of that data relies on sort of collection from business owners. Not actually from the people who are doing the innovation. Now, in some cases that is the same person, obviously. But in a lot of cases, it's not, particularly in the kind of bigger companies that we were working with. So, I think that's the first challenge we've had. And then on the flip side of that, we haven't collected data from people who have experienced difficulties in accessing the programmes. So, we don't know the scale of the problem. So, I think that's the first sort of barrier that we came up against. That's the same for a lot of programs across Wales that relied on European funding to fund those activities, whether it be research at the lower end, or indeed innovation at the higher end. So, that's the challenge for a lot of organisations that I've come up against. I think that in terms of how we can address it, as you know, we aren't going to be benefiting much from European funding into the future. We are going to be using our core funds, and whilst there's a negative impact on that in terms of there will be less funding to actually go around. It does present us with a much greater opportunity in terms of how we direct that funding and how we change the data that we will collect into the future. So, what's important to us is that we collect the data that is meaningful and that we will use going into the future. So, we're going to struggle in terms of baselines, but we will have a better data set into the future. My colleague who is on the call today with me, Philippa Davies will be leading that work to do that. What the minister is also committed to is that we will publish, and we will conduct a review at the one-year point post publication of our



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delivery plan, and then the 3- and 5-year points, we'll have formal evaluation. So, we'll be able to report against the progress that we've made on this into the future. So yeah, I think those are the sort of key points I would air on that question.

JC: Thank you very much, Abi. I think it's really interesting what you said there earlier about possibly the person doing the innovating is not recognised, innovation is recognised as the company as a whole. So to get data on ethnicity would be very, very difficult. But I am looking forward to the improvements that are to come from that. I'll share the video from Patricia now.

PM: How is Metal Seagulls structured? Metal seagulls is a small private limited company run on our vision for next-gen business opportunities. We are very much for equality. We are community-centric, and we very much believe in inclusivity, embracing neurodiversity and ethnic diversity as the foundation principle of our core business. Now, you might wonder why we don't actually employ any cleaners in our company. Every individual just works really hard to keep their workspace clean. And with that, everybody believes that as we all work in this company, if you do an apprenticeship and you work with the company for 5 years, everybody gets the same basic pay. Yes, we do. Well, we very much believe in people. We put people first before the business. Therefore, in the morning we have a briefing about what's going to happen on that particular day, as you do this talking to people in the morning to hear people's view and how they feel. You don't wait until there's something needed to be done in order to listen to people. Because people are first, we very much work on the betterment of the individual. People are sent on courses. People need to grow in business, and these are the basis of our business. We are not solely for making profit but we believe making a profit will come once individuals are happy, and each person has to feel they are growing. They have to feel they are learning, and they have to feel their views are being taken into account in the organisation. So, the managing director, for instance, his view or her view are just as important as that of the person on the shop floor, or the person laying under the aircraft and draining the oil or changing the spark lock on an aircraft as he comes into the workshop. So, we believe very much as we head on towards Nex Gen, we are a company that are serving the need of today. But we are also laying that foundation ready for tomorrow. Therefore, in our company everybody works equally, everybody's views are equal, we are a happy group and everybody's happy. In the morning, we operate each other with, because we live in Wales we either go, Bore da or the many different languages that we speak in our company, and that's how the day starts and everybody's happy. Even at lunchtime people come in just to talk. Everybody just wants to be around because we are that family centric. We love to talk to people and hear people's views. We might start from listening to somebody's weekend and how it went to did you know we are designing something here today, and that's how we operate here at Metal Seagulls.

JC: Thank you very much. I think there's an important point there from Patricia particularly on creating an environment where everyone is comfortable to share their views and investing in the people in your company so that they can bring in a different perspective, whether that's from the director all the way down to the person changing the oil. And I think when you create



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that sort of environment, not only do you have a higher rate of retention, but you also get people more comfortable to tell you what their new ideas could be. So, I'll pass it over to Selima to ask the next question.

SB: Thank you, Jainaba. Next question is to Akmal. Minority ethnic communities are diverse in terms of their social and cultural identities, certain communities and groups, including women, are more inclined towards entrepreneurship than others. So, what do you believe, are the typical barriers that prevent some communities from pursuing entrepreneurship? And what assistance do you believe they require to generate innovative business ideas? So, firstly are the barriers, and then what assistance they require.

AK: Thank you, Selima. I think I've included in my previous comments with regards to the barriers. I think in terms of the key barriers which Black and minority ethnic communities face is generally in terms of skills and training development. So that's something which is very important, which, of course, we have put up an entrepreneurship programme for training and skills programme. Then obviously, the biggest barrier is the access to finance. The cultural and social sensitivity about it in terms of accessing finance, and how that eligibility can be addressed. Obviously, we are as an organisation are doing it. And we have developed our own algorithms and cultural sensitivity. Because of that community centred approach, we have got a very close relationship with them. The other bits that you think in terms of entrepreneurship and innovation, they go hand in hand. Because the entrepreneur is also someone who has got an idea, who is essentially dissatisfied with the system or a product or a service. So these people, the aspiring entrepreneurs, they always think about something that can actually really change the way people are eating, living, facilities, things like that. What whatever that product or service that would be. They start looking at entrepreneurship as a means to be able to realise their business idea and that is where that innovation bit becomes very strongly. I feel that in my experience, especially in Wales, that there are people who are very innovative. And when we talk about innovation, just like I think Abi was discussing about the general strategy of Innovative Wales, and the Future Generation document that we are talking about. I think sometimes we take innovation to a very high level. Maybe as a NASA strategy or something like that. And you know, this really puts people off. To me, innovation can be done at any level, at the very surface level, at the base level at the mid-level, at the high level at the senior management board level. So, all of these are processes. It's just how we apply our experience to these business ideas, and how we can help these people to turn these basic ideas. And again, I go back to that disruptive innovator approach. They are very low skilled, low technology, low sort of profitability products in the beginning. And this is how they do at every level. I mean, just like Patricia is saying, they can do parts for aeroplanes. Whether or not they've got an innovation that they can replace one part with another, making it cost effective, making it easier it to get through the supply chain all that. So, what we are seeing in the world today is that how we can make life simpler for people? Sofia talked about the health sector, and I face this as I said, as a member of the Board. If we were to look at our A&E situation and we have got a target to say that nobody should be there for more than 2 hours or 4 hours waiting. We can look at the processes. We can innovate that process. We can make that simple process to be able to do that. Maybe there are some things that can be done differently. And



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that is what innovation is. I think that it's firstly, to bring this bar down when we talk about innovation. And specially I found this as an example, that when you're talking about entrepreneurship, we always straight away go to Richard Branson and all the big names. Sometimes someone who is just starting a business, thinks, "Oh my goodness, how am I going to reach this level? This is not me. It doesn't relate to me". I think it's that very local model that we can think, and it could be done in a very small office. It can be done in a very huge organisation. It can be done with huge amount of money, with technology, but it could also be done with a very simple change in the process. That is innovation, that is entrepreneurial. And that is what we need to support. So that's that skills pathway that we want to bring in to be able to help individuals to do that, and then we support them financially. Mentoring, advice, financially. The industry clusters, for example. Abi would be in a good position to lead us in that way. Now, what are the priority areas in which we are looking at it. We know the key areas are health sector, education sector, industry, manufacturing biosciences, IT, hospitality. So all of these are areas where we can involve ethnic minorities, and especially the 4 areas from my point of view, are hospitality, retail, transportation and healthcare. So these are 4 areas where we'll see a lot of the people are getting into industry sector areas. So skills development, advice and mentoring in terms of encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, mentoring and looking at the technology side of things wherever it is required. Because there could be some pieces of technology, we don't need to develop or make a whole program ourselves. I mean, my experience is that I neither had the budget neither had the experience or the expertise to be able to develop a whole financial system at the back end. So, what I did was that I looked around for technology. And I joined technology in a way which will give me a system which actually is something which I'm looking for, which is good for my customers or consumers or beneficiaries and the benefactors. So these are small innovations, but they mean a lot into the system. Last thing which I just very quickly want to cover is the government policies. The enabling environment for the ethnic minorities is very important. And that is something that should be seen to be done through organisations like yours, like us, like all these other people. How we can engage these people and let them know that innovation is not a word that you need to be apprehensive about. Innovation is a simple thinking, and especially women are great innovators. I tell you; I mean they have solutions. They know how to do it. So, if they are encouraged in the entrepreneurial mind. My God, this world is going to be very different.

SB: Thank you Akmal. I could see a lot of smiles there with that comment, I'm not going to expand on it but thank you. So going over to Jainaba now to ask the question to Sofia.

JC: Thank you very much. So, for Dr. Vougioukalou. CARE is located in the SPARK building among other organisations such as EYST Wales. This form of colocation, having different sectors and researchers in one area often fosters innovation through collaboration. Do you believe that collocation can assist minority ethnic researchers in accessing the social network that would help them in becoming innovators?

SV: Yeah, I definitely think that this is the case. For people in the audience who haven't been to SPARK yet, I think we very much look forward to organising other events as well. Many people



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from the audience were part of our MEAD SPARK networking session, which is the Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Diversity Research Group (MEAD). We held an event where EYST was also present. Where people gave enlightening talks about their work. It definitely enables us to be able to meet people in the corridors or at lunch time. We also have mentoring programmes for the researchers, but also a system where you have an attaché to which organisation that can provide the cross pollination that is required. I would say definitely, this is part of the role of SPARK, for the collocation to enable further communication, and also to access schemes such as the summer placements as well, where students can work with external organisations. I'll put a link in the chat as well about what is SPARK.

SB: Thank you, Sofia. So next question is to Abi. Abi, when designing interventions, do you believe it is more effective to have targeted programmes so specifically for ethnic minority communities, or to make the existing programs more inclusive?

AP: Thank you, Selima. So great question. From my perspective, I think it's a bit of both. So, what I know from my involvement in Innovate UK programmes. I've done a bit of work on the Women in Innovation specifically, but I know they do it. They used to do Young People in Innovation as well. Those targeted programmes are welcome probably because they usually come with a wider wrapper of support. That sort of does that broader capacity building that Akmal's been talking about. You know that support to start a business to access appropriate finance, all that type of stuff. So those programs have been welcome. And they've got some new programmes as well that aim to sort of tackle a much broader range of protected characteristics. I think they're important. And we've committed specifically Welsh Government not to duplicate those programmes, but actually to support Welsh people to access them. So Welsh government offers that additional support to help Welsh innovators from all backgrounds to hone their applications and get more success out of accessing UK level money. On the flip side of that, we've got a kind of a very flexible innovation support offer now. Mainly because what we got told when we did our engagement work for the strategy was that people were kind of fed up, of having all little pockets of money that they could access and having to kind of put together a jigsaw funding for their projects. They wanted a kind of much more flexible offer that had one access route into it. So, I think right great, but then there's a whole lot of work to do around accessibility for those types of programmes, not just for ethnic minority people, but also for the kind of broader diverse groups, which affect everybody really? So for example, some of the specific feedback that I received on some of our programs is, for example, the language we use in applications is very male. And it's not until you actually go and look. And I thought, well, that's a different kind of comment there. When you actually went back and looked at some of the examples, for example, that we use in application forms, they're right. They are very male centric examples. So, things like, if we say, outline your qualifications or your chartered status, we use examples of organisations that are predominantly male. We need to be much better in sort of using examples and language that people can identify with. We also know that disabled people have struggled with some of our application processes. So, there's a lot to be done here. In terms of accessibility, certainly. And then I think, just to bring in some of the delivery aspects of this. It's important for us to have diversity within our own delivery team. So that we can support different communities to



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innovate. But certainly, amongst our innovation specialists, they are sort of dedicated support advisers who can help people navigate, not just our support, but also the sort of broader landscape of support which I appreciate can feel like spaghetti junction on times. I know there's a couple of Business Wales advisers on this call who can give much better insight into the support that they offer. But I mean Business Wales is a broad support offer. There are some specific actions that Business Wales are undertaking under the Anti-racist Wales Action plan that we've got. So again, you know, as Akmal pointed out, having that strong policy environment is really important. And we've got that in terms of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. Business Wales are doing some specific stuff around training, business advisers to be able to give appropriate advice and reviewing their whole offer to make sure again that it is accessible. So, there's a whole raft of activity. But I think it's fair to say there's a lot more work to be done, both in terms of making current programmes accessible, but also in considering how we fill gaps left by UK programmes and how we support people to access those programmes that are dedicated towards ethnic minority groups, and indeed people with broader protected characteristics as well.

SB: Thank you, Abi.

JC: Thank you very much, Abi, particularly on language. I think I came across a saying that when you use language such as “be bold, be daring” and women are less likely to join a programme, whereas when you use, “be creative or help your community”, they're much more likely to join a programme. I'm going share a video from Patricia, and then we will move onto the audience.

PM: I often get asked, does being a woman or being black restrict me in business or hinder my business growth in the sector in which I work? You know this is not a very straightforward question, and it's one where you have to be careful how you answer it. Did you know in my sector, it's only 6% of the world pilots that are women. Only 8% of engineers are women. Now, I like to tell people, I'm a proud black woman in the sector in which I work. You know it's not straightforward. I just want to tell you a story. A few years back, a very well-educated man walked into our workshop and walked straight past me to what he recognised as a Caucasian male voice. Only to ask that he wanted something change on his aeroplane, and to be told that the Black lady who he just walked past was the one going to work on his plane, and it didn't bother me. I worked on his plane whilst he insisted on incredulously wanting to watch what I did on his aeroplane. It didn't bother me. I never mind people watching me do work. In fact, I take more pride if people want to watch me do work. After working on his plane, from that day on he wasn't going to let anybody else work on his plane apart from me. So you see, when I told you this question is not one which you can answer easily. I tell people being Black is not an adversity, it's only an adversity if you view it that way. From that day on, I changed his perception towards walking past this woman, or walking past somebody of a different ethnic minority to what he was. I changed his perception, and he went on to sing my praises, so I often tell not just people of different minority backgrounds but I tell young people in general, especially the female ones, that in order to be seen as an equal with that of your male counterpart, you have to be twice as good, sometimes even 10 times as better, in order to be



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seen as equal. So, I believe sometimes it's not what we see ourselves or not what people are telling us we are, but we can change perception. And it takes that one person just to create that positive energy. And sometimes it's not just how we look. We can do a job regardless of what we look like, what our religious beliefs are. We don't have to sit down. I believe I don't need to sit and wallow about being black, because being black is not, it's not a crime.

Attendees Q&A

JC: Thank you very much, Patricia. So, we'll move onto the second half of the forum, where we'll open the floor to the audience so that they can ask questions to our panel members.

Attendee: Thank you, Jainaba. Thank you to the host and the organisers. Really crucial and much needed forum today. My question is for Sofia. From the findings of your research Sofia, what would you say is or are the main barriers to innovation in social care services for older people from ethnic minority groups when we're talking about dementia care?

SV: Thank you very much, [attendee] for this really important question. I'm sure everybody has seen the news then about poor dementia care, dehumanising experiences, caregiver burnout. And I think because dementia is a progressive disease, we need a lot more tailored engagement for people with dementia in their own native tongue, according to the specific stage of dementia care. So, what happens also when people have advanced dementia is that they lose their acquired language, and they might refer to their mother tongue and that is causing a lot of problems in communication as well, which then in return might lead to restrictive behaviour, which can then also lead to the conditioning prolonged periods of hospitalisation or delays in discharge into the home. Which is a priority area in the way of innovation strategy as well, which is the phenomenon that's often called bed blockers. So social innovation in this area with communities, is really keen on solving this problem of delay discharge. But that can only happen if communities can feel comfortable and safe to share their experiences without any repercussions. So, this is why in my area of work, I always start and invest in public engagement. Letting people know who we are and what we're doing through tailored events in specific areas. From there we invite people to join us as public involvement advisors to advise on the lines of inquiry, on the questions asked, and then we progress into research participation, so that then we can also deliver more tailored recommendations to the cultural and linguistic needs of communities. But also tailored to the stage of dementia and the care support network that is around the person with dementia, because all of those are highly varied. A person who has completely lost their command of English, but who has a very extensive network around them will not have the same issues as someone who doesn't live near family and who can still speak English. So, it's a very complicated field. Needs a lot more research to understand the complexities.

SB: Thank you, Sofia.



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Attendee: Thank you very much Jainaba and fabulous speakers today. Honestly, there's loads going around my head. So, excuse my long haul reflections and the question, which is probably a rhetorical question. But this just something hovering around my head listening to Akmal talk about skills development and mentoring and all these interventions that are readily available to address diversity in innovation and other sectors, just indicates that we have the answers. We know what should be happening in terms of upscaling people. And then, I think about all these equality strategies as well as the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan on the one hand and on the other hand, I think about the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which my office overseas, and the 5 ways of working that we advise so long term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. All very important elements in progressing work within equality. And other facets of you know the workplace. So just thinking about all these strategies that are out there and available. And then there's also the Welsh government equality strategy which is a consultation at the moment. And I'm just thinking, how do we link into the broader Welsh government equality strategy with all these other strategies and action plans. How do we integrate them to make them speak to themselves? As opposed to operating in in silos? And I know again Akmal, you mentioned government policies. So, I don't know if anyone's got any thoughts or ideas around this. Thank you.

AK: Thank you so much [attendee], wonderful reflection. And I think you're spot on in terms of what do we do in view of the landscape that we have in terms of our policy and strategy documents. We just had a conference in November which was exactly looking at this question. And it was about fostering inclusion and diversity amongst the business support ecosystem. How can we foster more of that? So, we thought that we will take that leadership to be able to bring everyone in the stakeholder system at one place with a very common agenda. What would be the best way to achieve those documents, or the strategy, or the objective, or the goals, or whatever we may call them at different stages. One of the things that came out from that conference is collaboration, cooperation and not being working into the silos, as you have mentioned, and which there are many. Still, there are many. Because each organization or the government departments or sections has got that agenda to achieve. So how to make that as a common agenda. So that's number one. The second thing which also came out that was very important was the implementation of these policy documents and all that through an interactive approach. Rather than saying that we have got this document, we have ticked the boxes. we've got 5 women in our department, we've got 3 young people, we've got 2 from the minority ethnic community, this and that, and we are diverse. That doesn't help. This has got to go into the community and we don't expect people to come to us, I mean at least certainly at ACF we don't. We want to go to the communities ourselves. And that's what I was talking to you about the relational strategy, that understanding, that empathy that we need to talk about. So that interactivity and proactivity is something that needs to be done more. And the third thing from my experience, and it was touched from the Conference point of view was that we need to support ethnic minority focused community organisations. Rather than trying to do everything ourselves, which is going to take a longer time and we may be able to do it. But it's that cultural literacy, it's that cultural sensitivity, it is that cultural understanding of how we can deal with different kinds of communities. So sometimes as an organisation, it is very difficult to hire 10 people. I remember in the early 2010, we were

running that entrepreneurship programme with the Welsh Government and the European Union, and we had 35 different nationalities or people from different ethnic origins. The Western Mail at that time called us the Mini United Nations. Because we understood that, it's fine to say Black and minority ethnic communities, but that's a very broad-brush statement. Within those communities are so many diverse cultures. So many diverse and complex understandings, that we have to deal with those people, to be able to encourage them. And that is why our focus is very much on that individual entrepreneurship to be able to help them. What is in their mind, how we can empower them. What we can do. So those are the 3-4 areas from our experience that we think is going to help that implementation of that policy strategy documents that we have.

JC: Thank you very much for answering that question and thank you very much [attendee] for your question. I'll pass it to Selima.

SB: Thank you and thank you [attendee] for your question, And Akmal for answering.

Closing Statement from Selima Bahadur

SB: I think we've come to the end of the forum. So firstly, it's just a big thank you to my amazing team, Jainaba, Twahida and everybody else who's attended from EYST. And also for you as attendees, it is not easy to take time out

to attend these sessions, and I hope the hour and a half flew by for you. It did for me. And it's lovely to see some old friendly faces there as well, [attendees], people who I haven't seen for quite a while. Lastly, the panel members, you're amazing. We could have listened to you for hours more, I'm sure. So, Akmal, Abi Phillips from Welsh government, Sofia and obviously in absence but the lovely Patricia as well. So, thank you. Anything else from you, Jainaba before we wrap up for the day.

JC: That's all from me. I just want to thank everyone, the team, the panel members and attendees. Really appreciate that we could all come together and have this insightful discussion.

Information Shared in the Chat Section



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- Sofia Vougioukalou: <https://diverseecymru.org.uk/leave-no-one-behind-improving-pathways-to-dementia-information/>
- Sofia Vougioukalou: Here is the actual report on dementia care priorities: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/142814/1/Research-Briefing-Note-Leave-No-one-Behind-140721.pdf>
- Sofia Vougioukalou: Here are my research briefings on arts and health <https://ylab.wales/HARP/researchbriefings> People in this forum might find interesting the one on EDI [https://ylab.wales/sites/default/files/2022-10/HARP%20research%20briefing5 EDI%282%29.pdf](https://ylab.wales/sites/default/files/2022-10/HARP%20research%20briefing5%20EDI%282%29.pdf) and Innovation [https://ylab.wales/sites/default/files/2022-09/HARP%20research%20briefing2 innovation.pdf](https://ylab.wales/sites/default/files/2022-09/HARP%20research%20briefing2%20innovation.pdf)
- Sofia Vougioukalou: I'm CARE's Research Fellow responsible for developing new research programmes in inequalities and social care. If you have any ideas you'd like to discuss please email me at vougioukalous@cardiff.ac.uk
- Sofia Vougioukalou: Here is a link to SPARK which is located on Maindy road <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-science-research-park>
- Sofia Vougioukalou: Here is a link to the newly established Centre for Adult Social Care Research <https://cascadewales.org/care/>
- Sofia Vougioukalou: Thank you very much for coming today. If you'd like to connect on social media, please message me at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sofia-vougioukalou-61335b54/>
- Abi Phillips: Thanks again for the invite, please feel free to get in touch abigail.phillips@gov.wales.
- Claire Rees: Thank you very much for a very helpful session. I'm the Comms lead at Future Generations Cymru/Future Gen Commissioner. claire.rees@futuregenerations.wales if you'd like to collaborate.

From the All Wales Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Engagement Programme – Thank you to everyone for attending and sharing experiences, to the guest speakers for their time and insight, and the attendees for all their valuable contributions and questions.



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