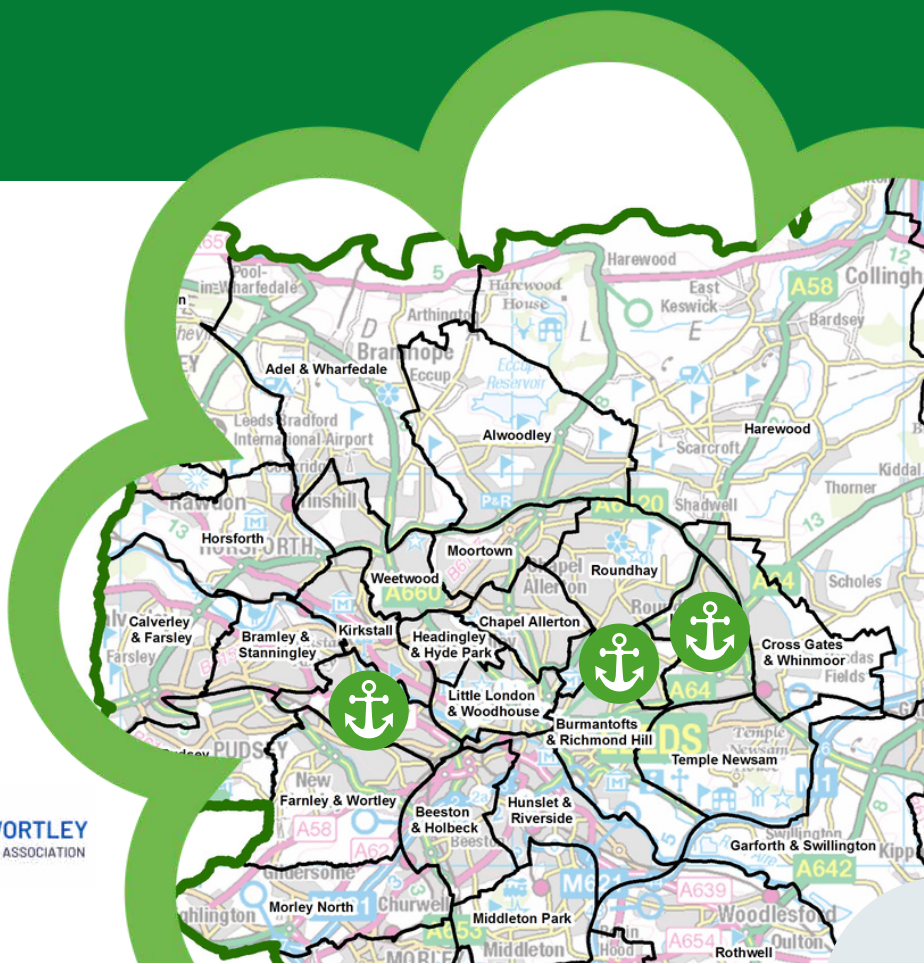


# Good Jobs, Better Health, Fairer Futures

Leeds Community Anchor Network Listening Exercise – report and key findings

Published: June 2023



# Contents

Background	2
Methodology	3
Postcard Findings	4
Focus Group Findings	5
• Taking Feedback on Board - important reflections	13
• All recommendations	16
Appendices	18
• Appendix A - Equality Monitoring Data Summary	19
• Appendix B - Postcard Template	22
• Appendix C - LCAN Members Map	26

# Background

Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) is a Leeds-wide network of trusted third and faith sector organisations. The network aims to maintain the connections made during the Covid pandemic which saw many of its members mobilise quickly to provide front-line support to people and communities in their locality.

This network is made up of community-led organisations or partnerships - Currently, 24 organisations have signed up as lead-members, a full list can be found [here](#) (or in appendix C).

Collaboration rather than competition is one of LCAN's guiding principles and the network works to support small, grass roots, groups and organisations. A key aim of the network is to work with communities, utilising the knowledge and lived experience of citizens to bring about long-term systemic change.

The network has been involved in the Good Jobs Better Health Fairer Futures project board and were asked to carry out a listening exercise to 'tap into' the knowledge and experience of their local community to better understand how Leeds Anchor Network (the city's largest, mostly public sector, organisations) can utilise the skills and experience on offer in three geographical locations of the city.

## Organisations involved

The listening exercise involved three members of the Leeds Community Anchor network based in separate wards of Leeds (each identified as 'priority wards' by Leeds City Council). The names of each organisation and information about them can be found below:

### **New Wortley Community Centre on behalf of Armley CAN – Armley Ward**

New Wortley Community Centre is a community-owned and community-led centre located in New Wortley, an inner-city area of West Leeds, West Yorkshire. The centre opened in 1982 and is managed by New Wortley Community Association, a membership group of people that work to improve the area of and lives of residents living in LS12. They provide support to residents living in New Wortley and the wider Armley ward offering a range of services, groups and activities to empower them to lead happier and healthier lives.

## **Give a Gift – Gipton and Harehills Ward**

Organisation Vision: To work towards an environment where people can live in a manner where they are made to feel welcome and valued regardless of their background. To simultaneously ensure that poverty alleviation remains integral to our core work.

Mission: To empower the beneficiary community to play a more active role in civil society, through maximising their potential and improve their wellbeing and quality of life by providing targeted support activities.

## **LS14 Trust on behalf of We Are Seacroft – Killingbeck & Seacroft Ward**

The LS14 Trust was set up in 2009 by a group of local people who wanted to work together to change the communities that they loved across Seacroft, Swarcliffe and Whinmoor.

Their vision is to see LS14 become a welcoming, vibrant, happy place where people feel in control and are proud of their achievements - a place where every resident is safe and respected. We want this to be a well-connected community which recognizes its power to bring about and sustain positive social change.

# Methodology

New Wortley Community Centre, Give a Gift and LS14 Trust each asked up to 20 people to take part in a short, 5-minute postcard chat. Using an asset-based approach, people were asked **'what skills and abilities do you have and how could they be better used? How would this make your life better?'**. All those conducting the exercise were given a full prior brief in a separate postcard.

Participants were then asked if they would like to take part in a more in-depth focus group discussion around barriers and solutions to make better use of the skills of communities in their area. Points raised in the postcard discussion then went on to form the basis of the discussion in the focus group.

The feedback from participants in these focus groups was recorded by each individual organisation and sent to Voluntary Action Leeds to be analysed.

Feedback from the groups was taken on an anonymous basis, with no participants in the group, or postcard being specifically named. Organisations did collect data anonymously so we can understand the make-up of the community members involved.

The postcards and summary of the results of the equality monitoring of participants can be found at appendix A and B of the report

# Postcard Findings

We used the key themes from the initial data set shared from the postcard exercise to inform the subjects at the focus group.

Each area presented different issues that were specific to the area and to the communities represented, however there were also some recurring themes across each area.

Some of the main points named in the initial postcard exercise were as follows:

Theme	Community Anchor		
	Give a Gift	New Wortley CC	We are Seacroft
<b>Meaningful volunteering opportunities</b>	Volunteering with a progression route could be one option to look at supporting them further.	More volunteering opportunities for people.	Understanding that people that volunteer are good people to employ.
<b>Recognising strengths within communities</b>	This cohort have a varied and, in some cases, considerable background in sectors such as health and education but are not currently being utilised.	Focus on what people's interests are, build support around that. Allow people the room to diversify from previous jobs and help them to build skills around that.	Tap into the skills and strength of the community and 'where it is at'.
<b>Childcare /carer commitments</b>	Many were single parents who had to work within school hours.	Need more local opportunities for those who have caring responsibilities.	Lack flexibility of working hours. Financial pressures of childcare.
<b>Community mentors/role models</b>	Recruiting peer support workers from the same communities to help mentor/support clients.	People being directed to those who are best placed to support them as they understand your background / specific needs.	Support young people to be leaders and support in pathways to work.
<b>Support with lack of confidence</b>	Find entering the world of work daunting.	Patience and time which (employers) do not appear to have these days.	Strong sense that people should be given second chances.

Theme	Community Anchor		
	Give a Gift	New Wortley CC	We are Seacroft
Localisation of opportunities		Knowing where and how to find the information about opportunities within the local area would be helpful to everyone.	Recognise the value of local networks, friends recommending and advocating opportunities and pathways.
Meaningful, fulfilling jobs		Focus on what people's interests are, build support around that.	People not just motivated by money but want to belong, be part of a team, and feel valued.
Other barriers to employment	Language was a big barrier.		Lack of money/ resources at home. Need / desire to support family.

# Focus Group Findings

Participants expressed a number of barriers that communities currently face to accessing good jobs that lead to better health outcomes.

Along with these barriers, potential solutions were also provided that can be implemented to address the barriers, providing communities with the support required to obtain jobs that they feel would lead to improved overall health and wellbeing.

## Digital Exclusion

Digital exclusion provided a significant barrier to many participants being able to access information about jobs, how they can apply for them and how they can also acquire the skills for those jobs.

In one group, it was stated that **“50% of people in the room do not have access to the internet either due to cost or not understanding how to use it”**, representing multiple barriers that caused digital exclusions for communities.

The internet was described as **“scary when you don’t know how to use it”**, implying that some participants would, at the very least, require support from a friend or other knowledgeable community member when accessing opportunities on the internet.

In addition, other participants described the financial barriers that contributed to digital exclusion, with **“cost”** being highlighted as a factor in not being able to use the internet.

Some participants would **“use friends’ houses and neighbours WIFI’s or use the buses or local shops like Asda, and fast-food restaurants to access on (their) own devices”**, meaning that they lacked a consistent, independent method of being able to use technology.

Due to these factors, it was felt that communities would benefit from **“a person to sit with them and help to understand how to access the internet”**. This could ideally be a peer support worker from the same background who has both the cultural knowledge to relate to people in communities in question and the digital knowledge they can pass on to them.

## Key Point

Digital exclusion is a significant barrier to securing good jobs and requires support for community members to gain confidence in navigating the internet and resources in order to regularly access Wi-Fi and technology in general.

**“50% of people in the room do not have access to the internet either due to cost or not understanding how to use it”**

## Recommendation

1. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, give consideration to offering ‘offline’ recruitment opportunities, particularly for roles that don’t require digital literacy.
2. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, consider varied approaches to recruitment, including initiatives such as ‘all in one’ application processes (where candidates speak to a recruiter, are supported to complete an application form, and potentially proceed to interview all in one face-to-face session).

# Localisation of opportunities

Participants told us that there were existing events such as job fairs, as well as training courses to gain employment skills, that were useful in being able to find work or find out where to look for opportunities.

However, it was felt that these opportunities often took place in the city centre or in other parts of the city, requiring significantly more time to get to for community members, particularly those who already had caring responsibilities.

Therefore, if events and training courses such as these were organised in the local area and clearly advertised in the community it could provide a key boost in helping community members find roles that they can apply for and gain more confidence in being able to look for these opportunities.

## Key Point

Opportunities such as training courses and job fairs should be organised in multiple local communities and advertised clearly in local noticeboards so that communities can more easily access these events themselves.

*"I have found very little notice boards or anything in the area, there should be jobs posted up and more notice boards"*

## Recommendation

3. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, work with community-based organisations to design and deliver local recruitment activities (i.e. job fairs) within locally trusted and accessible spaces, including additional related support such as interview techniques and CV writing.



# Access to volunteer opportunities

Many participants shared a wide range of skills and experience that were currently under-utilised. People were keen to access volunteering opportunities that would put their already existing skills to good use and allow them to learn new skills, subsequently increasing their confidence in finding a job.

Despite this, participants reflected that volunteer roles did not currently feel accessible, with some attempting to volunteer in schools, while others had also tried to volunteer in hospitals. Participants felt that “trying to get (their) foot through the door was very hard”, meaning that while the enthusiasm and ideas on where to volunteer were there, accessing these opportunities was where the barriers came into play.

It was felt that these barriers could be significantly reduced if a volunteering scheme was set up, with agencies and employers collaborating to produce roles that would utilise volunteers’ existing backgrounds in industries such as education and health.

This would allow potential volunteers to have increased access to roles that were specifically tailored towards them and advance their routes into employment; while employers would also obtain volunteers who have the skillsets that they require.

## Key Point

Community members require more bespoke volunteering opportunities that are geared towards the skills that community members possess and will enable them to gain experience and build confidence, particularly for those who are returning to the labour market.

## Recommendation

4. That Leeds Anchor Network and Voluntary Action Leeds work together to review current volunteering opportunities available within Anchor organisations, consider how they could be better promoted to local communities, review application processes for voluntary roles, and consider what further support can be put in place to support employability skills and pathways to employment from volunteering.

# Exclusion based on individual backgrounds

Across all three focus groups, participants expressed that they had been unable to pass through the job interview stage due to factors that related more to their background rather than the skills they had.

Community members educated and trained outside of the United Kingdom reflected that the qualifications they obtained for jobs in other countries were “not accepted here in the UK”, for example one person shared: “I was a nurse in my own country but to work here I would have to have GCSE maths and English in order to do a healthcare assistant job in hospital.”

Aside from qualifications not being accepted, other participants recounted experiencing barriers related to age and language. One participant “went for an interview and they told me I was too old”, implying exclusion from a job based on a factor outside of their control.

Job applications were also significantly challenging for those whose first language was not English, often requiring the assistance of support workers to complete an application which, even with the help of a support worker, “still took two hours”. The recruitment process is often challenging for those whose first language is not English and presents barriers for those who may still have the qualifications and experience necessary for a role.

Therefore, in multiple cases despite having the skills and experience required for a job, community members reported still facing barriers that are beyond their control such as age, language and home country qualifications.

## Key Point

Community members face multiple different barriers to obtaining jobs based on factors not related to their skill level such as age, language or qualifications obtained overseas not being accepted in the UK.

*“My level of education in my country was not accepted here in the UK, I was a nurse in my own country but to work here I would have to have GCSE maths and English in order to do a healthcare assistant job in hospital.”*

*“I went for an interview, and they told me I was too old.”*

*“A member of staff has just supported a Nigerian service user fill out a 10-page application form. This alone was an issue as English not his first language and the form took staff 2 hours, and he would not have been able to fill out on his own due to needing the questions explaining he was answering.”*

## Recommendations

5. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, design recruitment processes that are appropriate / proportionate to the role in question, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach

6. That Anchors use their position and influence in the city to demonstrate and promote the value of a diverse workforce to other employers.

7. That Anchors seek to recognise experience / qualifications gained in other countries and support people into roles where they can gain experience and undertake recognised qualifications in order to progress.

## Support for individual circumstances

Participants across all groups felt strongly that their individual circumstances provided significant barriers on their employability and were difficult to address.

Circumstances such as mental and physical health or existing childcare / caring responsibilities would hinder their ability to work regularly without some acknowledgement, support and flexibility from their potential employers.

Those who are living with mental and physical health difficulties were likely to “have a drop in confidence” and therefore take time to adjust to being in work. More “understanding” of this from employers could mean that potential employees have a chance to readjust back to working life where their skills could then become of good use to employers once their confidence is regained.

Similarly, those with existing childcare commitments may only be able to work during the school term time and may find the cost / availability of childcare outside of term-time a significant barrier to employment.

In terms of being able to address this, Give a Gift mentioned how they had once helped train women to pursue childcare courses to be able to either work in nursery/primary school settings or consider a home-based service. This was made possible with a European Social Fund grant and proved to be successful because the staff employed were bi-lingual and the support offered encouraged the women to complete the training and use this as a steppingstone to pursue further training.

If this support was readily available and accessible to communities, employment would be easier to maintain for people with a variety of backgrounds.

## Key Point

Employers should implement measures that show understanding and support of potential employees' individual circumstances such as mental and physical health, and caring responsibilities that provide significant barriers to gaining employment.

## Recommendation

8. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, work to review their approach to recruitment in terms of external marketing and promotion in order to encourage people from marginalised communities to see them as potential employers (including consideration of the imagery of people used and language around organisational aspirations for the make-up of the workforce).

***The above points would cover all protected characteristics, but in this particular exercise, we heard discrimination around people with English as a second or other language, older people, people with poor mental health, people who have been out of the job market for a while, single parents or those with caring responsibilities and people with a background of offending (not all protected characteristics).***

### **Some examples of actions could be:**

- **Target part-time roles at parents with caring responsibilities by advertising at nurseries or schools and community organisations, offering hours within school time (e.g. 9.30 – 2.30).**
- **Target geographies close to employment to create more accessible workplaces**
- **Work with local organisations offering employment skills to advertise jobs to those involved.**

## **Opportunities for a ‘second chance’**

Participants from areas that experienced higher levels of deprivation and crime felt that past history and choices could present a significant barrier to them obtaining a job that utilised their skills.

Community members described a range of skills that they had to offer such as “advanced microblading artist and eyebrow specialist”, “Business administration qualification and IT skills” and “peer support worker”. It was felt however that these skills were being underutilised as participants’ past history or circumstances were leaving them without an opportunity to get to an interview stage for these roles.

There were examples shared of how “people may have made mistakes dropped out of college get tempted by something else” in the past but were now ready to “own (their) past, seeing it as something to learn from and as strength going forward”.

This would however require a “second chance” from potential employers who could show more understanding and patience of individuals’ past and instead place more emphasis on the skills they had to offer now and the aims they now had for a future career.

### **Key Point**

Participants had felt that a “second chance” should be provided for communities, with more emphasis placed on the skills and attitude that they have now rather than their past history that were currently a barrier to them obtaining jobs.

## Recommendations

9. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, review recruitment processes to ensure that people with previous / unspent criminal convictions are not excluded from consideration for roles where lack of convictions is not an essential criteria.

10. That Leeds Anchor Network work with Community Anchors and other organisations to support the development of 'role models' within target communities who can demonstrate their career path and be advocates for others, particularly young people.

# Taking feedback on board - important reflections

Aside from acknowledging the existing barriers and the potential solutions to address them, groups also felt that there were important areas to consider when implementing any changes that could lead to good jobs and better health for communities.

These areas of reflection would provide an acknowledgment of the potential that newly implemented support could have on communities, as well as how any changes that were made as a result of consultations could be communicated, reassuring communities that their views had been heard and led to change.

## Recognising the potential of reducing the above barriers

Previous examples provided by groups expressed the significant impact that supporting communities could have on their employment prospects.

The Hooner Kelah Project in particular was described as a previous example from the late 1990s where women from South Asian backgrounds who had very little English attended ESOL, IT, childcare courses & sewing classes to gain non-accredited training which then went onto accredited training with colleges.

Gaining this support had enabled the women to go on and accomplish some significant achievements, obtaining roles such as Head of Maths in a high school, family law solicitor, nurse and childcare workers.

Implementing support such as training courses and peer support in local communities can potentially have a huge impact both on individuals and on society, with individuals changing their lives through the job roles they earn while organisations gain the skills of these individuals that otherwise may have been missed.

### **Key Point**

Previous examples show the significant difference that can be made to communities when support is implemented and therefore emphasise the importance of providing this support.

## **Feedback loops and co-development of solutions**

Whilst participants acknowledged that focus groups and consultations were important in having their voices heard, previous experiences had led to pessimism about how much impact these activities would then have in the future in terms of tangible actions.

There was a feeling that once these views had been expressed and recorded, they would then go “further up the chain” and ultimately be lost until the process continued again with a consultation about the same issue without the previous comments being addressed.

Participants therefore wanted to see direct change as a result of their views and for it to be clearly shown through changes in the support received and the resources made available with the assurance that these changes were being made as a direct result of what participants had said.

## Key Point

Communicating changes that have been implemented as a result of this engagement and, most importantly, working with communities to develop solutions, is crucial to building trust and faith in public agencies.

*"It's okay having meeting for focus groups, we hear what's being said and you're taking notes and that goes further up the chain and then we wait and sit back with great expectations, and nothing has happened and we're do the same thing again, it's happened over and over again."*

## Key Recommendation for Leeds Anchor Network

That organisations from Leeds Anchor Network commit to working with a group of community members to reflect on the findings of this report, and co-design one or more pilot initiatives to find solutions to the challenges presented in this report, to support greater inclusion in employment and voluntary opportunities.



## All Recommendations

1. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, give consideration to offering 'offline' recruitment opportunities, particularly for roles that don't require digital literacy.
2. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, consider varied approaches to recruitment, including initiatives such as 'all in one' application processes (where candidates speak to a recruiter, are supported to complete an application form, and potentially proceed to interview all in one face-to-face session).
3. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, work with community-based organisations to design and deliver local recruitment activities (i.e. job fairs) within locally trusted and accessible spaces, including additional related support such as interview techniques and CV writing.
4. That Leeds Anchor Network and Voluntary Action Leeds work together to review current volunteering opportunities available within Anchor organisations, consider how they could be better promoted to local communities, review application processes for voluntary roles, and consider what further support can be put in place to support employability skills and pathways to employment from volunteering.
5. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, design recruitment processes that are appropriate / proportionate to the role in question, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.
6. That Anchors use their position and influence in the city to demonstrate and promote the value of a diverse workforce to other employers.
7. That Anchors seek to recognise experience / qualifications gained in other countries and support people into roles where they can gain experience and undertake recognised qualifications in order to progress.

## All Recommendations

8. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, work to review their approach to recruitment in terms of external marketing and promotion in order to encourage people from marginalised communities to see them as potential employers (including consideration of the imagery of people used and language around organisational aspirations for the make-up of the workforce).

9. That employers, including Leeds Anchor Network, review recruitment processes to ensure that people with previous / unspent criminal convictions are not excluded from consideration for roles where lack of convictions is not an essential criteria.

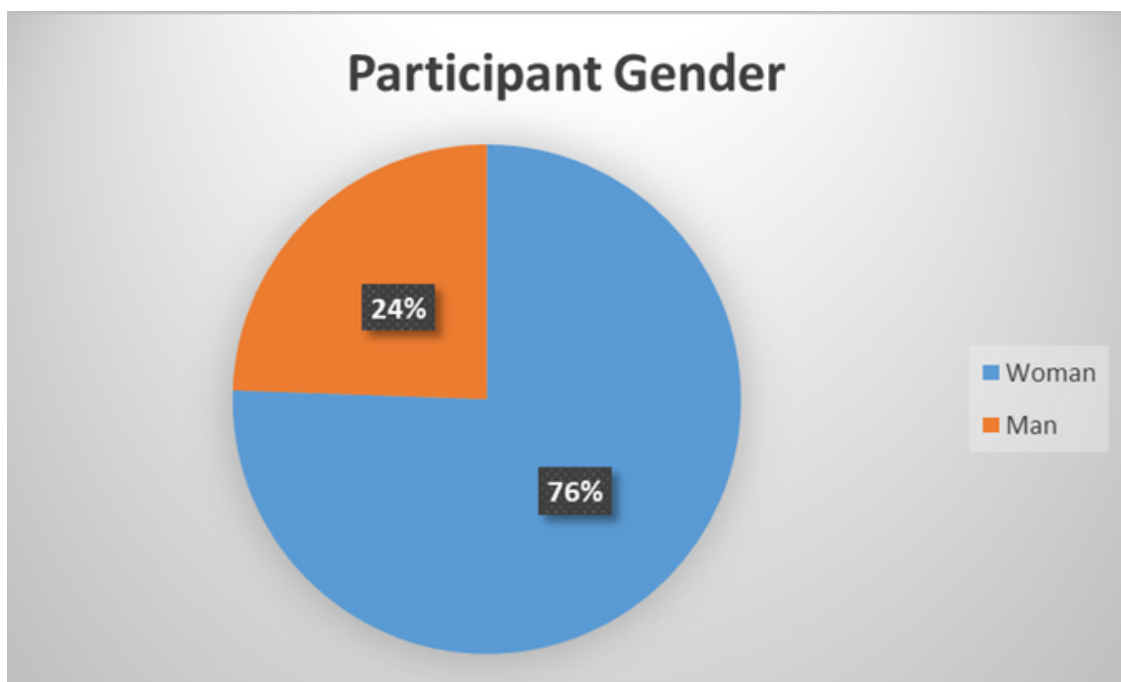
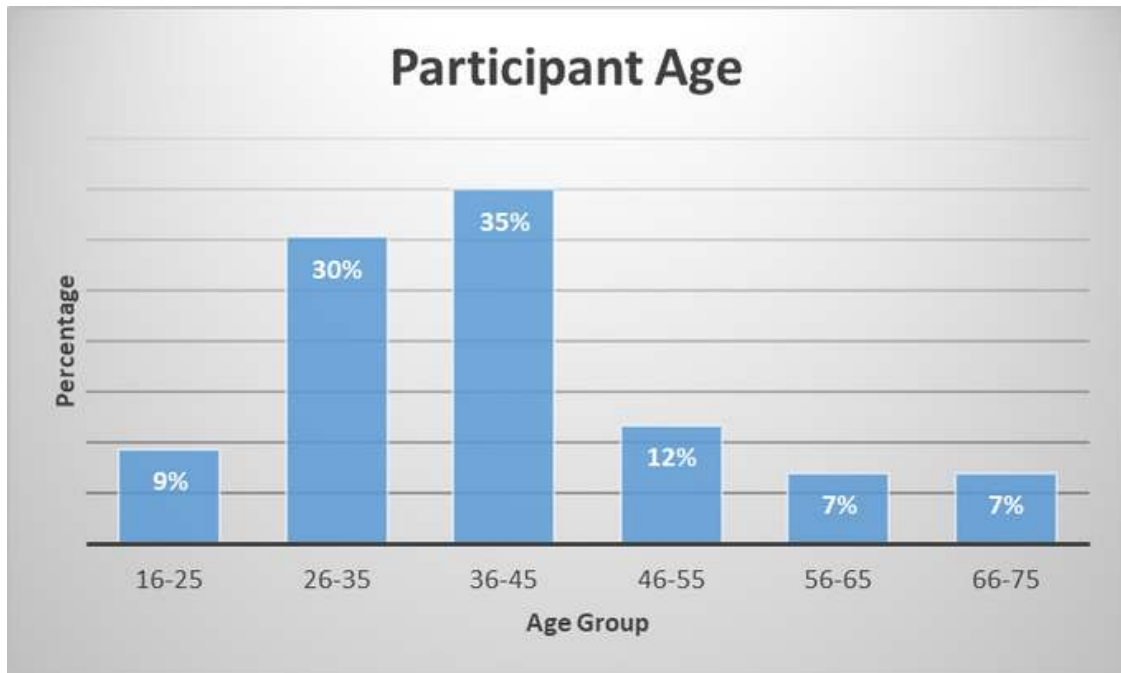
10. That Leeds Anchor Network work with Community Anchors and other organisations to support the development of 'role models' within target communities who can demonstrate their career path and be advocates for others, particularly young people.

11. That organisations from Leeds Anchor Network commit to working with a group of community members to reflect on the findings of this report, and co-design one or more pilot initiatives to find solutions to the challenges presented in this report, to support greater inclusion in employment and voluntary opportunities.

# APPENDICES

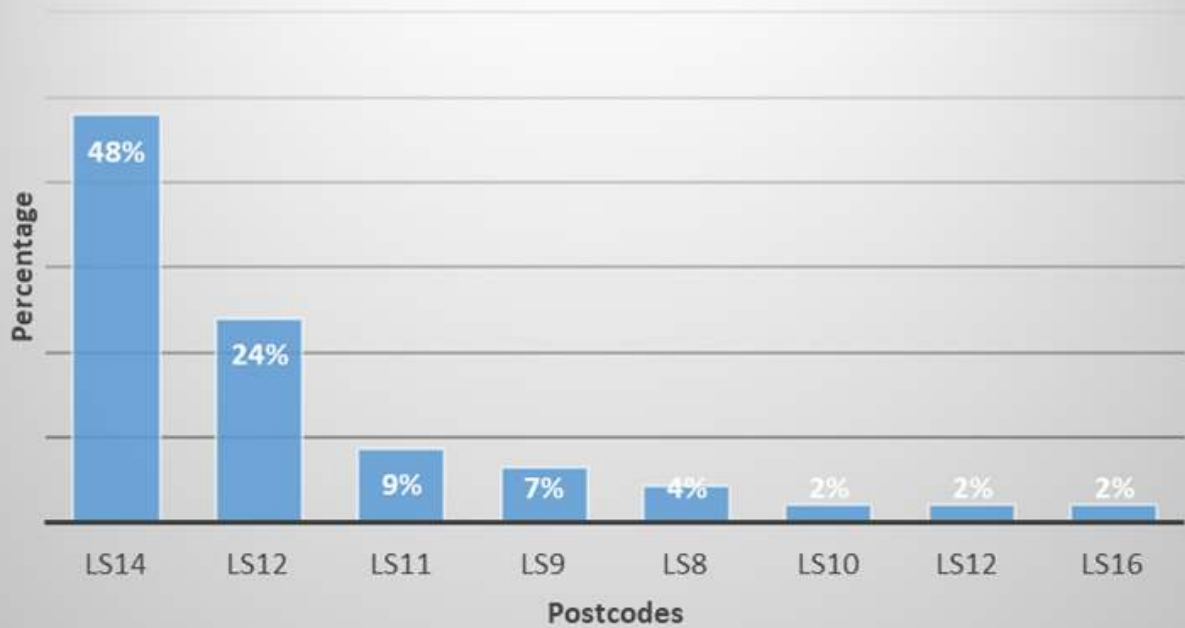
---

# Appendix A - Equality Monitoring Data Summary

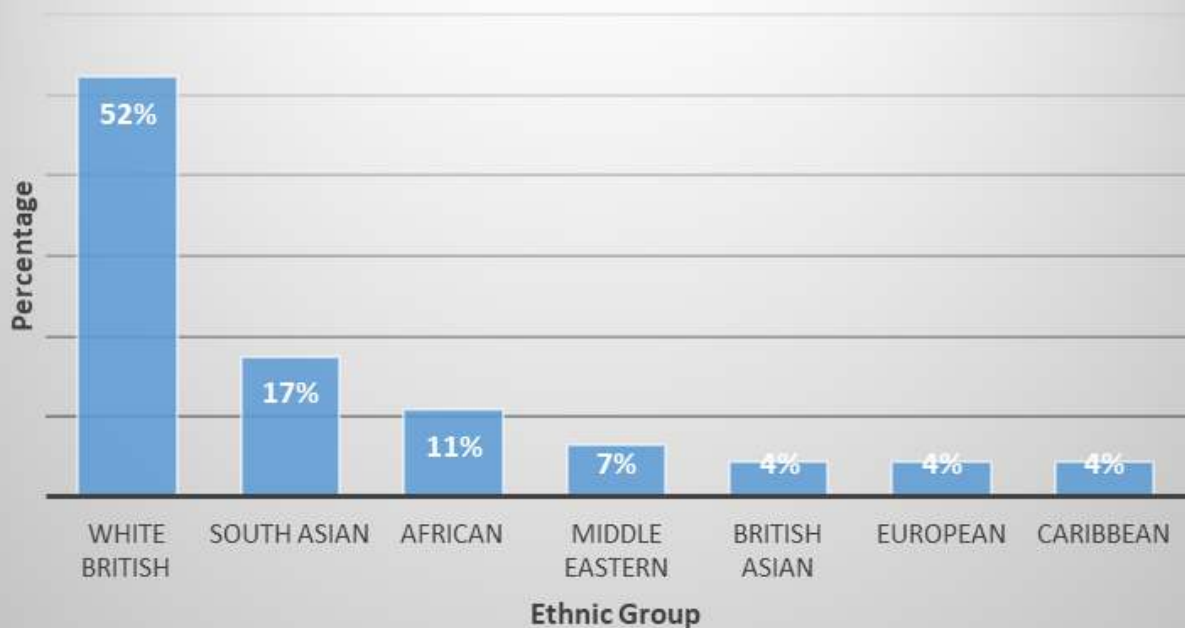


**\*Please note, Give A Gift's focus group was held with an all female group**

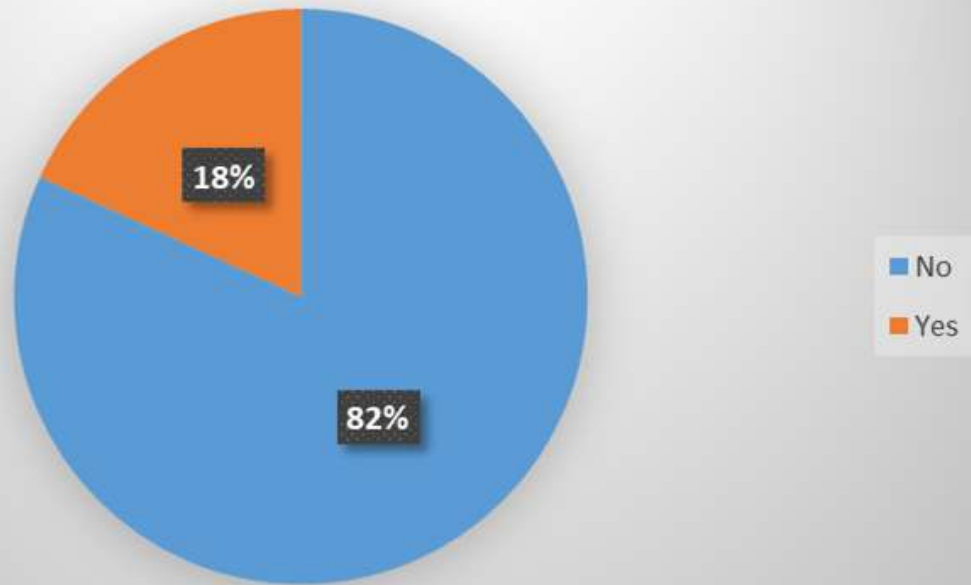
## Participant Postcodes



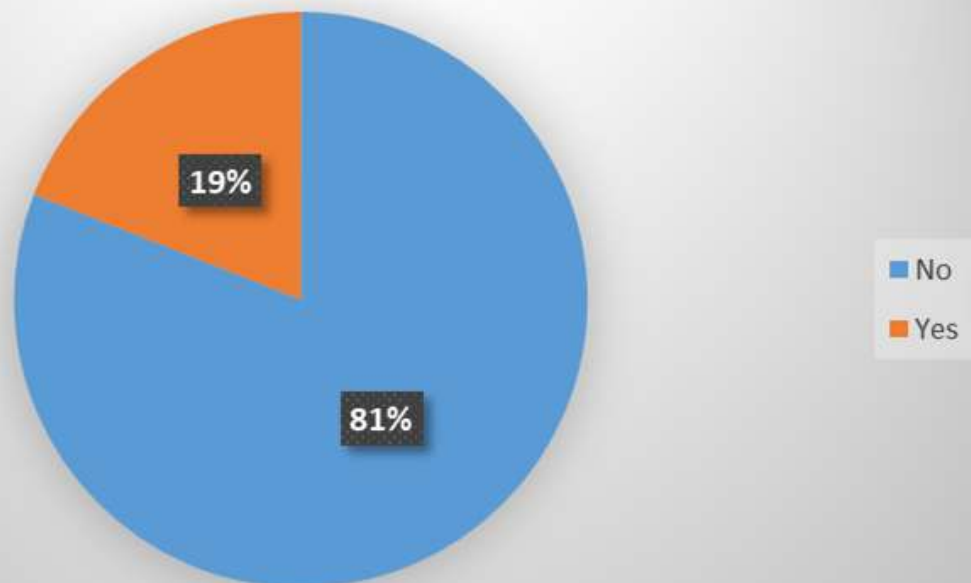
## Participant Ethnicity



## Are you a carer?



## Do you have a disability?



# Appendix B - Postcard Template

Please ensure everyone who conducts the interview reads and understand this page :-)

## What is the project about?

Leeds Inclusive Anchors are a network of big employers in the city, including Yorkshire Water, Leeds City Council and Leeds University.

They're working on a project about how good jobs link directly to better health.

This is a 'listening project' to find solutions and ideas from community members about how more people who live locally can seek opportunities to be employed and get better jobs.

There are 13 anchor institutions in Leeds: Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City College, Leeds and York Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, University of Leeds, Leeds College of Building, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds City Council, NHS Digital, Yorkshire Water, British Library and Northern Gas Networks

## Keep an open mind...

- ✓ We don't want to second guess what people will say, have an open mind and listen out for key points to write down.
- ✓ Don't assume people have a job, equally don't assume people are in a bad job!
- ✓ If you can, ask some prompt questions (as suggested on the back of the post card) - we want to know what skills might be under-used, what barriers people might face and, ultimately, we want to begin to find solutions to help get people into better jobs.
- ✓ Confidentiality is key - make sure people know their name will not be attached to their answers.

---

## Practicalities and next steps

We want you to interview 10 - 20 people in your area.  
Each interview/chat will last no more than 10 minutes.



Only ask people if they want to take part when they are in a 'safe space', for example a parents and tots group would be more appropriate than asking someone stood in a food bank queue. People can withdraw at any time, make sure people know that their answers are anonymous.



It's really helpful for us to know the 'make-up' of who is taking part to ensure our sample represents the community. If people are happy to, please ask them to complete the monitoring form which is then kept separately from their details.



The next step is to get a focus group together to look at some of the points raised in more detail and begin to find solutions. At the end of the chat please ask the person if they would be interested in taking part in an hours focus group.



---

**Question: 'What skills and abilities do you have and how could they be better used?  
How would this make your life better?'**

“

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

”



Are you working at the moment?

Are you using all the skills that you have?

What could be done in this area to help people develop their skills?

What would help you get a job / better job?



Please help us understand who has taken part in this chat - all your answers are anonymous

**Age**

16-25  
26-35  
36-45  
46-55  
56-65  
66-75  
75+

Prefer not to say

**Ethnicity**

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Prefer not to say

**First 4 digits your postcode?**

Prefer not to say

**Disability**

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

Yes No Prefer not to say

**Carer**

Do you provide unpaid care for family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability?

Yes No

Prefer not to say

**What gender best describes you?**

Woman (including trans women)  
Man (including trans man)  
Non-binary  
Prefer not to say  
Other (please specify):

This project is about finding solutions from people in our communities. Do you want to be involved in a further chat about the ideas you have raised? It will be about an hour.

Please leave your name and contact details here if you want to take part (all your answers are anonymised).

Name.....

Contact.....

# Appendix C - LKAN Members Map

