The Changemakers project is aimed at supporting young BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) people aged 16-25 in Dundee through offering information and advice on employment, apprenticeships, training and volunteering. Past research carried out with young BME people found that schools and universities are relied on heavily for help in finding placements and opportunities but that the system does not work reliably. The study pointed to the beneficial role that community leaders can provide in informing young people with relevant information on employment and providing links for those without pre-existing professional networks. Changemakers works as the mediator between the young person and employment agencies as well as helping them to gain confidence in accessing opportunities independently through providing help on CVs, cover letters, assessment guidance and interview tips. Changemakers carried out a survey to help better understand the issues facing young people and employment, with consideration of potential religious or cultural issues that may act as factors that are taken into account when considering opportunities. We feel this may provide some perspective from a BME young person for the Scottish Governments Inquiry into Removing barriers: Race, Ethnicity and Employment.

Research has suggested that whilst unemployment in the UK has been stable, for ethnic minorities the picture is very different and has in fact increased. This is despite ‘levels of educational attainment improving significantly for ethnic minorities’ Further research has suggested that British Muslims in particular, face the worst discrimination out of any minority group and Muslim men were 76% less likely to be in employment of any kind when compared to a white, male, Christian of the same age and qualifications. The long term implications for the cohesion and integration of ethnic minorities in society could prove difficult if these trends were to continue. If well-qualified individuals remain excluded this could undermine their willingness to integrate into wider society and hence it is important that these issues are identified and addressed. The reasons for these trends remain unclear – some suggestions may be that:

i) BME communities do not have the right access to employment support to apply to roles in the first place,

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There are barriers or difficulties specific to BME communities or

Employers are simply not willing to employ those from ethnic minorities.

Whilst Khattab (2014) claims the latter and blames this trend for those from the Muslim community at least, on ‘growing Islamophobia’ the Changemakers survey sought to explore the alternative and/or additional options.

Young Muslims in Dundee consider religion a big part of their lives (Young Scot, 2010) and hence it is important that discrimination statistics for ethnic minorities and particularly Muslims do not impact negatively on their attitudes to employment. Rather it can be used to help motivate them to strive harder to eliminate negative stereotypes and get themselves aware of mainstream agencies and services available, local opportunities and employment advice. The focus that the Changemakers project takes is for young people in particular; on empowering them in learning more about opportunities available, the Employability Pipeline, and help with making job applications. The aim is that young people from BME communities have all the information on employability and hence opportunities that they need before, or at the start of their journey into full time work.

Changemakers reaches out to BME youth from existing YYI youth programme as well as through places of worship and community centres. We currently reach out to 700+ people through our social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as through the Changemakers smart phone app which is updated with jobs, volunteering opportunities, and employability events. The app is a strong tool in reaching out to our younger market as a lot of time is spent on smart-phones. One of the features of the app is it can be used to send alerts to young people’s phones when new opportunities come up and through it, young people can request a job pack and application form within seconds from their phone. The app also has a ‘fan wall feature’ which serves as a forum for young people by young people, to share their experiences of the application process such as interviews and provide support and advice to others in a similar situation.

We identified the need to gain a better understanding of young people and their views, to take on board young peoples’ difficulties and barriers into employment and developed a survey to collect views. The purpose of the survey was to identify and thereafter address difficulties faced by moulding our services to our target audience better in order to tackle problems faced head on.

The survey aimed to generate statistical data and hence consisted of multiple choice questions. These were broken down into:

- Demographics: ethnicity, age, gender
- Social media habits

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6 Young Scot, Access All Areas project (2010).
• Reasons for wanting a job (economic, career progression, experience)
• Sectors of interest (present and future)
• Barriers to employment (Difficulties in stages of application, lack of experience, religious/cultural issues)

There were also ‘other’ comment boxes under relevant questions to allow participants to share any additional details if they wished to do so. Participants were recruited online through Changemakers and Yusuf Youth Initiative Facebook pages, and Changemakers Twitter and Instagram pages; members of which are predominantly from BME communities. Non-BME individuals were not excluded however as the survey was advertised as ‘open to all’. Whilst Changemakers focus is on young BME people from the 16-25 categories, the survey was open to under 16 and also over 25 groups. This was with the intention to compare results by age group and also BME to non BME groups, however the vast majority of responses were young BME people so this was not pursued.

**Demographics: ethnicity, age, gender**

There were a total of 23 participants: 4 who identified as ‘White Scottish’, 14 as ‘Asian’, 2 as ‘Black’, 1 ‘mixed’ and 2 ‘Others’ (specified as Scottish, and Pakistani). 69.6% were female and 30.4% males. In total, 78.3% of respondents were within 16-25 age group, 8.7% falling in under 16 category and 13% falling in over 25 group.

**Social media habits**

Facebook was voted as the app used most in free time (38%), then Instagram (31%) and then Twitter (22%). The remaining 8% was distributed among shopping apps, games apps and ‘other’.

**Reasons for wanting a job and sectors of interest**

When asked what sector they were looking for a job in at present, 46% of respondents chose the Retail sector and ‘Anything’ equally at 23% each. Interestingly though, when given the same options but asked what sector they were interested in in the future 0% of responses were in ‘Retail’ or ‘Anything’ but were more varied with the ‘Other’ option coming in at 47%, with more specific responses like ‘Computer Science’.

In describing the motivation behind wanting to find a job, the most popular answers from respondents were to earn extra money (38%) ’, a chance to develop on skills and for personal growth’ (24%), and for regular income without relying on parents’ (22%). None of the respondents felt that education was not for them and that employment would replace it, and neither did any feel they had pressures to support family members financially.
Barriers to employment

When explaining difficulties experienced, 37% of responses were CV related with participants expressing that either they had difficulty communicating skills on paper, they didn’t feel they had anything to put on a CV or that they hadn’t got around to doing it because they didn’t know where to start. 18% expressed that interviews was an area of difficulty, either because they were too nervous and unprepared or that they did not know why they were unsuccessful after interviews. Confidence, or lack of was brought up by 16% of respondents and 28% felt that that they were unsure of where to start in a job search, what kinds of roles may suit them or where they were going wrong.

The final question explored barriers that may be specific to faith or cultures. Promisingly, none felt that their previous needs hadn’t been attended to in the past by an employer. However, it must be noted that the majority of the young people
may not have been employed before hence this was not applicable. 32%, the majority of people felt that their faith or culture was not a factor when applying for a job. However the remaining 68% did. Figure 3 shows the factors considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers dress code compatible with beliefs/culture</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal appearance compatible with employers</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role involved conflict of interest</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate facilities such as prayer rooms</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference to work in single sex environment</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be treated differently because of race/religion</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority of employees non-ethnic, worried won’t fit in</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Barriers specific to BME communities**

**Discussion**

The results found that when participants were given the same options but asked what sector they were interested in in the future 0% of responses were in ‘Retail’ or ‘Anything’ compared to 46% choosing Retail and Anything at the present time. This suggests therefore that:

- At their current state young people are desperate for ‘anything’ and
- Do not see themselves as being good candidates for the roles they want to pursue in future.

Whilst this may be because of specific career routes needing further education such as PGDE for teaching, if there were more entry level opportunities offered to young people in such areas, as a teaching assistant for example they could be better equipped with skills and experience as well as practical knowledge for when they qualify. The findings also point to the financial aspect of getting a job and it is clear that money motivates young people. They also see a job opportunity as having the added benefit of becoming independent from parents financially. There is a need therefore for more paid work placements.
After gauging responses about barriers to employment, Changemakers will provide information sessions on a regular basis on CVs, cover letters, mock interviews, building confidence and local opportunities as well routes for training such as Modern Apprenticeships.

We also aim to uncover in more detail barriers that may exist due to cultural or religious reasons. Dress code such as religious head covering and modest clothing has been found to have weighting on considering job prospects and ways in which this can be overcome will be explored further. It is also evident that there are conflicts of interest with certain jobs that may involve alcohol, interest and pork for example. Changemakers will seek opportunities that are more appropriate for our users from BME communities. Ethnic, cultural and religious barriers will also be discussed further through a focus group in order to understand with more depth the difficulties faced.

Yusuf Youth Initiative
July 2015