

NOORJAHAN BEGUM

1. When did you first come to Britain? (What was the reason, why choose Britain?)

1978, I joined my husband

UK

1. When coming to the UK what were you thinking? Were you excited (about?) or fearful (of coming to a new country-environment?)

I was not very worried we were happy. I was thinking that I would have a better life here with food and clothes. I was happy because my family was very small, in fact I was with my children so no family members were left in Bangladesh

2. What were your first impressions of the UK?

It was not bad at first we went to a hotel than went to council housing option. During that time housing option was very impressive, then and there they re-housed us in hostel. We were welcomed by Bengalis as well as English people. At that time there were quite a few Bengalis were here and there. In Paddington there were only 5/6 families.

Westminster

1. Were there other Bengalis settled? Asians, Blacks, other non-Bengalis (their numbers, single men, women, children, families?)

Only 5/6 families were in Paddington

2. Did you know English? (Level-fluent, to get by, none?)

I could not speak English but I was brave to interact with English people with my own methods sign language. When we went to the Housing option they filled up our forms, we just showed the papers and documents. When we were in Hotel, we come across a Bengali family, who helped us during that time. We did not know about Social Security, they phoned us and sent us a form and asked us to go to the office to get financial support. At the beginning we were using our own money.

3. If not, how did you communicate with non-Bengalis? Learn English? (Class, course, friends, relatives, neighbors, and community groups, TV, radio, cinema)?

I had some problems to send off my children to school, I need help from others. There was a voluntary organization in Church Street area called "CHIC". They run English classes; I went there and found another Bengali woman also attending this class. I did 6 weeks classes there on English and same time I also motivated some others to participate in this classes. Six weeks later I went to an employment in

Bayswater Embassy Hotel. Only I used yes or no I wanted to job to maintain my household cost.

Language barriers, cultural differences and religious obligations

1. If you didn't know English initially how did you communicate with neighbours, doctors, milkman, post office, on public transport, in shops?

I had no problem to interact with white people. As I started my employment, mostly I had to work with white people.

2. Were your neighbours helpful? (Who else?)

That time it was really very good. Very few people of our community were able to speak English during that time however; our neighbors were quite good and helpful. That time most of the English people were helpful not like now. Currently, it is very hard to identify who is who.

If Muslim

3. Do you observe Ramadan? Does your daily life change or do you do things differently during the month? – Pray more or abstain from anything you do usually?

That time not many people were fasting. I have seen most of the people were openly smoking. It was not like now. Currently there is a strong Islamic trend everywhere but it was not before. There were not many places for prayer, Regents Park Mosque was built after my arrival. Slowly people started to go to prayer.

Experiences of service providers in integrating the Bengali community

1. What kind of support did you receive from the mainstream society and local service providers and your own community? (ask to be specific with examples)

Language was the main barrier during that time. Even I myself did some interpreting for our Bengali women during that time.

Children

- 1. What were your greatest fears (if any) in allowing your children to be integrated within the mainstream society? (your thoughts/feelings) What factors predicted their successful integration? (What would have made you proud?)**

I never had been much worried about my children.

- 2. What were your thoughts (if any) about raising your children maintaining their own culture within the mainstream society?**

I had a dream to educate my children but I could not as they were not enthusiastic in education but the current generation is doing their degrees or obtaining good education. Only my youngest daughter did well and doing good job.