

ABDUL HANNAN

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

1975

2. **Where did you settle and why? (If not Westminster where was it? What made you come to Westminster?)**

I thought I will come to make some money. My family friend lived in London and found us a flat to stay in.

3. **Did you come on your own? (If not who were you accompanied by anybody? With relative? With your children?)**

I came on my own then went back to Bangladesh got married and then came back with my wife.

4. **Did you come to join other members of your village/neighbourhood/ family who had previously migrated to the UK?**

I came to join all my family which was very nice.

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 saw a lot of people visiting Bangladesh from the London who were spending lots of money. Therefore, I was very excited to come to London to be in the same position one day.

2. **What were your first impressions of the UK?**

It was very different but in a good way and comforting.

3. **What did you find different (to Bangladesh-people/accommodation/weather/transport/built environment?)- (Any familiarities with Bangladesh?)**

There were no familiarities to Bangladesh like the cars that were around and even the food. People were really caring here and took care of each other in those days. Some days there was rain and some days there was good weather compared to Bangladesh, in the UK you had a bit of everything it was not limited.

4. Did you bring anything from Bangladesh to remind you of back home? (For your children? What items?)

I don't really have particular items to remind of back of home but I bought a few clothes with me.

5. What were your expectations of the UK if any? (Expectations from relatives/people who had been to the UK/images/media/films etc)

I thought I would get lots of help as a lot of my families were already here. My family gave me £5 and £10 here and there and also clothes.

WESTMINSTER

1. How did you find Westminster at the time? What was it like?

There was day and night difference.

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

There were lots of other Bengalis as I stayed with my brothers. We along with other Bengalis stayed in a restaurant which we worked. There were four rooms and five of us would share one room and the restaurant owner would stay in his own room.

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

I went to a language school which my older brother took me to as he was already settled here. Slowly I learned how to speak English.

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

At first there were problems in communication with English people but then I was fine, although I did have my brother to help with translation.

Language barriers, cultural differences and religious obligations

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

My brother helped me

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

Very helpful

3. What clothes did you wear (for women was sari a problem-how was it viewed by English people?) How did you cope in cold weather coming from a hot country?

I wore suits and tie. At work I wore a t-shirt and trousers. In the cold I just put a sweater on.

4. Was halal food easily available? No – What did you eat?

I could find some halal food as I knew settled Bengali Muslims already.

5. Did you find any difficulty in practicing your religion? Did you have to make compromises? How do you feel about that?

I did practice my religion freely and no one minded. In the room I stayed in with seven other people it was struggle due to the lack of space to pray.

6. Do you feel you are able to freely practice your religion in the public sphere in the UK.

We were very free to practice as the government did not stop us.

7. What was Eid day like when you first came here, and has it changed now?

I was very excited, I woke up had a shower as there was something to celebrate. However, all the men around me were going to work on Eid so I did not have a proper eat.

8. 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?

I did not keep fast in Ramadan in those days.

EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE PROVIDERS IN INTEGRATING THE BENGALI COMMUNITY

1. Were you able to go to any agency for help? (From Whom? - CAB, Council, GP, library etc.)

I did not get any benefits and did not want any.

2. How did you spend your spare time? (TV, radio, films, newspapers, hobby, visiting friends-who, relatives-where, park, museum, places of interest?)

There was green park and Hyde park close by where English people would play football, even though I could not speak they would involve me and teach me how to play. People were very friendly.

3. Did you go to cultural or faith events? (Where & Name the events)

They did not really have much when I was there. However, I did go to one music event after I finished work.

CHILDREN

1. If you didn't come with children when & where did you have your first child? (Home, hospital? What was it like in hospital? Nurses? Doctors?)

I went back to Bangladesh to have my first son and came back to London in 1984. When I had my second child he was born in Middlesex hospital. The experienced nurse took care of my wife as I was not happy with a male in the room.

2. What was their first crèche/school like? For yourself, your child? How were the teachers?

My wife took my kids to school and everyone there was very nice and helped a lot.

3. Did you get any support provided from the local community, schools, health centres, and community organisations? (If yes what kind of support did you receive?)

The schools were helpful as they use to take my kids out.

4. Who did your child play with? Who were his/her friends? Other Bengali kids or mixed?

My kids played with a lot of white children and I did not mind. This is because when they came home I kept an Arabic and Bengali teacher to teach them so they did not forget their culture.

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

I thought I would want my children to not forget their own culture and did want to send my eldest either back to Bangladesh or to Islamic school. However, I did not get the chance but ensured we taught our culture at home.

6. Would you allow your children to marry outside your culture?

I would not allow this at all.

7. Would you allow your children to marry outside your faith?

I would not allow this at all.

SETTLING IN WESTMINSTER

1. What struggles and obstacles did you face in adapting your life in raising your new British born child/children?

The biggest obstacle was that my children were adopting a British culture when they kept speaking in English and losing their Bengali culture.

2. What role did you play to educate and raise your child/children between two cultures (British & Bengali)?

I supported their studies but ensured at home they only speak Bengali and was not allowed to spoke English so they did not forget.

FUTURE

1. What Westminster is like today compared to when you first came in ...? (Biggest changes you have seen, how has it changed)?

When I first came everyone was nice but here and there in the streets white people will not be too nice against people of my color of skin. One day I was asked to do overtime at work and I was very happy to do so because I get extra money. Whist doing my overtime my manager said I can leave early I will still pay you, as I was leaving in my work clothes a white man approached me and through me on the floor and hit me. I went back into work and the customers said a dirty man has come in tell him to leave. So then workers took me to the hospital. Nowadays it is more multicultural and Westminster is better classed and it doesn't happen now.

2. How British are they? (How integrated are they? How British do they feel? Do they have many White friends?)

I told my children they can associate with white children out of the house but can never bring them home.

3. How Bengali are they? (how much are they in touch with the Bengali community/Bangladesh/Bengali language?)

They are Bengali and speak to me in Bengali always.

4. How religious are they? (devout/practicing/political/non practicing but culturally Muslim/secular/humanist/non-believing)

They go to mosque and pray and fast which is enough.

5. How do you see their future? Would you be happy or disappointed?

Their future is very good. I just am very disappointed that my children will never go Bangladesh. They would always live here and in Bangladesh nowadays things are not good as they used to be, it has deteriorated so they would never be able to see my home. Also I could not educate them fully to what I would like them to be as my wife predominantly wanted them to learn religion. I am still happy as they are good human beings.

6. Ideally how would you like their future to be?

I know their future would be good as things are better than how it was when I first got to the UK and when I had to sell curry and rice for a living.