

## **Executive Summary: Public Engagement & Research in North East Scotland: Perspectives from Ethnic Minority Communities**

In 2023, GREC delivered a series of workshops with ethnic minority communities in Aberdeen to explore participants' ideas about research, and consider how communities could be actively involved in building evidence about inequalities in North East Scotland. There were six workshops, with a total of 40 participants: 15 men and 25 women, ranging in age from their 20s to 60s, from diverse ethnic and national backgrounds. People were invited to discuss what research is; what topics they would like to see more research on; and how they would like their community to be involved in the process.

Broadly speaking, participants defined research as a tool for gathering information to understand a topic, or to find answers to a question. Most felt that research should solve problems or improve people's lives. Many participants were enthusiastic about getting involved in research, especially in lived experience groups to help bring knowledge from their own lives and communities into research and policy.

### ***Key research topics of interest included:***

**Information and Support for Newcomers:** In many ways, this topic encompasses all the others – many problems arise from a lack of information. Participants wanted to see more research on where immigrants find information, whether that information is reliable, and whether it meets their needs. Participants were keen to identify ways to improve access to reliable information, especially on everyday needs, health, rules and responsibilities, expectations and unspoken rules, people's rights at work or as tenants, entitlements to benefits and other support, and how to report problems or find help.

**Employment:** Especially under-employment among skilled immigrants, barriers to employment and prejudice in the workplace.

**Integration, Culture Shock and Mental Health:** Understanding people's experiences and identifying ways to make things easier, including how to get involved with community life.

**Racism and Unequal Treatment:** Including developing a better understanding of why people are treated differently between different groups, consciously or unconsciously. Also identifying strategies to reduce racism, especially in public institutions.

**Children and Schooling:** Understanding the experiences of children, young people, and their families, especially where misunderstandings and conflicts arise (often 'unspoken rules' of discipline, behaviour, and expectations). Also developing strategies to help families navigate these areas more effectively and support young people to thrive.

**Healthcare:** Including experiences with the NHS, barriers to accessing healthcare, and adverse outcomes from difficulties accessing healthcare.

### ***Recommendations***

There was a clear appetite for involvement in research and Lived Experience (LE) groups, so we recommend exploring how this might look for public and third sector organisations in the North East, and how evidence from these groups can help shape policy. By amplifying the voices of seldom heard communities, LE groups can contribute to research and help build a body of evidence that supports decision-making processes. As co-produced spaces, they offer a more sustainable engagement model, whilst building capacity at the grassroots level.