

# A briefing report from Savannah Wisdom Foundation

**Her untapped potential: including young British Asian women in growth strategies to support their greater work force participation and integration.**

Ensuring better integrated communities in partnership through social mobility



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*Some of the problems inclusive growth needs to address are around high levels of poverty and social exclusion, and gender and ethnic inequalities in the labour market.*

***Savannah Wisdom Foundation***

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March 2019

*In partnership with UBS Optimus Foundation*

**SAVANNAH  
WISDOM**

# Introduction from Savannah Wisdom Foundation

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Savannah Wisdom is an independent charitable foundation based in the North West of England which is committed to social change for a better world. Our mission is to work towards a more peaceful, equal and just global society where there is opportunity for all, without barriers.

Savannah Wisdom has recently been undertaking research to understand the situation of girls of South Asian heritage and the initiatives that could support their greater work force participation and integration. Our focus is on the North West of England due the diverse communities who live and work in the region and Savannah Wisdom being based in the area.

The North West of England has enormous potential to grow as an economic and cultural force within the UK. A vast part of this growth needs to be realised through the skills and character of the region's workforce. Ethnic minority groups in Greater Manchester are less likely to be employed than others with a 20% gap between ethnic minority women and other women. Young women of South Asian heritage are an important part of that workforce potential, however, they are currently underrepresented in the work place.

Further details on Savannah Wisdom Foundation's work in the UK and internationally can be found here: <https://savannahwisdom.org>

“ *We recommend a focused approach to including young women from BAME backgrounds in the inclusive growth strategy. This approach includes working closely with schools, other NGOs, local government and employers to make sure we meet their career aspirations and needs in terms of confidence building, work experience and parental and community support. We believe this approach will increase social and economic inclusion and mobility for south Asian girls, develop a more diverse workforce and better meet the diverse needs of our populations and address workforce challenges. Therefore it will go a long way to addressing some of the grievances that result in marginalisation and vulnerability to exclusion.*

***Shalni Arora, CEO of Savannah Wisdom Foundation***

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## **Savannah Wisdom Foundation**

Registered charity no. 1141619 <https://savannahwisdom.org>

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# Briefing on Her Untapped Potential

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## Introduction

Savannah Wisdom in partnership with UBS Optimus Foundation are seeking to increase the potential economic contribution South Asian girls can make to the North West of England. This Her Untapped Potential briefing report provides background on our research, plans for our schools pilot, following five principles for this work, and makes recommendations to stakeholders to act upon.

The inclusive growth gained via the economic and social mobility of South Asian girls and young women will also result in greater community cohesion and better integration. We will achieve this by tackling evident early drop-out of a notable number of young women of South Asian heritage from the labour market, despite typically high educational attainment.

Girls of all ethnic groups consistently outperform boys in compulsory education, people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to go to university than their white counterparts, and despite the huge potential these figures show, South Asian women typically have a lower level of economic activity. A headline statistic to set the scene for this briefing report is that 16-24 year old women from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian backgrounds are 22% less likely than their white/white British counterparts to be economically active.<sup>1</sup>

The Government's Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper of March 2018 stated that people can be held back from integrating "by cultural practices and attitudes or by their personal choice or fear of facing discrimination or prejudice. This often disproportionately affects women and girls." The strategy calls for action across sectors to dismantle barriers and offer everyone "the same chance to succeed". (Gov.UK, March 2018). We believe that improving economic and social mobility will have many benefits for individual lifestyles and also lead to better integration.



*... addressing economic opportunity for all is a key pillar to better integration.*

***The Greater Manchester Community Cohesion Commission***

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Note:

<sup>1</sup> Desk research over five months was undertaken by Revealing Reality in 2017, reviewing local sources of information, especially from public sector bodies in Greater Manchester and Lancashire, national sources of information, including Government policy and statistics, and also international sources, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and international NGOs.

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## Background to our Research

Savannah Wisdom commissioned a new anthropological study in 2017 with research agency Revealing Reality to understand the girls' own perspectives in relation to their personal work and life aspirations. Interviews with girls aged 15 – 27 took place via random sampling, in community organisations and in public places across the North West during 2017 in youth clubs, women's centres, coffee shops, shopping centres and community centres. The group of girls were of Indian, Pakistani or Palestinian heritage, practiced Islam or Hinduism, and were from a variety of different socio-economic backgrounds.

The anthropological research by Revealing Reality clearly highlighted a set of issues manifesting for girls of diverse backgrounds living, studying and working across the North West, particularly getting to the point of job interviews and work place experience. The common challenges faced by the girls were gendered expectations, lack of exposure to career paths, need to negotiate personal freedoms within the family and community environment, and misperception of the availability of support services, such as charitable ones typically for deprived communities. All of the girls interviewed experienced at least one of the challenges outlined or more typically a combination of the challenges which created barriers to a future employment pathway, and this is the focus of our philanthropic work.

The anthropological research demonstrated that there were a limited number of career routes that South Asian girls wanted to explore. These were usually teacher, social worker, accountant, pharmacist, or worked in business and marketing; one girl out of 31 wanted to be an aerospace engineer. Revealing Reality shared that “whilst these career routes are brilliant, it seems as though girls are missing out on a wider range of opportunities.”

We recognise that this is not the experience of all girls of South Asian heritage in the region as a number have created a pathway into continuous education and employment, supported by their families and communities, and younger people's views influence this. However, the basis of our report is the lived experience of girls of South Asian heritage in the North West who were interviewed by Revealing Reality in 2017, our research in 2018 and the development and delivery in partnership of a schools pilot in 2018/19.



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## Methodology to our Research

In addition to speaking to girls, Revealing Reality also consulted in 2017 with experts and practitioners working with girls in relation to their future development. These interviews highlighted barriers faced by girls of South Asian heritage and a set of potential interventions that could support girls to realise their full potential.

Savannah Wisdom then commissioned in 2018 strategic analysis on the landscape of these interventions with philanthropy and social policy advisor Cathy Elliott. This analysis in 2018 particularly sought options for pilot programmes and partnerships to test the most feasible interventions. Common issues identified were in relation to careers advice and support, such as young people's imaginations being limited by their exposure to different career options and limited family awareness of career choices. Joseph Rowntree Foundation research states that 72% of young people talk to their parents about what they want to do when they are older and families were found to be a very important source of occupational ideas for young people, including extended families. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011).

This combined research has led to the planning and delivery of a schools pilot in 2018/19 and publication of this briefing report, Her Untapped Potential.



*I don't feel I can do anything ... it is getting better, but it's still there and there's nothing I can do about it.*

***South Asian girl interviewee living in the North West***

# Briefing on Her Untapped Potential

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## Focus of our Philanthropic Work

Our combined research concluded that Savannah Wisdom's philanthropic work should contribute to achieving inclusive growth by removing barriers and giving broader opportunities to a number of girls of South Asian heritage who are facing actual or perceived barriers to future employment. Our aim is to provide new kinds of support for girls of South Asian heritage, supported by their parents and communities, on the girl's journey from education to early employment.

Reality's Anthropological research uncovered the experiences and situations of 31 teenage girls of South Asian heritage living in different areas in the North West via random sampling. The common experiences in their family life was of girls feeling constraints due to their gender and expectations to live their lives a certain way. As mentioned, we acknowledge that this is not the experience of all girls of South Asian Heritage as a number are fully supported into employment. However, the anthropological research in 2017 identified multiple barriers faced by those girls and young women randomly interviewed.

Our primary focus is the low labour market participation of young women of South Asian heritage in the North of England. To give context, Asian women aged 16-24 in North West and Yorkshire & The Humber are more likely to have 'never worked' or be long-term unemployed (12.94% and 16.05%) than white/white British counterparts (7.66% and 7.96%)<sup>1</sup>. The Millennium Cohort Study (CLS, 2018) stated that among women with a degree, the young Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black Caribbean women with degrees take home between £90 and £35 per week less than their white counterparts.

The GM Community Cohesion Commission states in their 2018 recommendations report that whilst GM is an ethnically and culturally diverse region, there are high levels of inequalities in the region. The Commission stated that inequality has been found to "negatively impact on social exclusion."<sup>1</sup> In his electoral Manifesto Mayor for GM Andy Burnham pledged to make GM a more equal society, and we hope this pledge extends to supporting youth skills development for future employment, especially for BAME young people, as well as encouraging greater cohesion in the workplace.

Our developing in-schools 2018/19 pilot focuses on supporting girls to plan their move into meaningful employment in the future, rather than focusing solely on continuous education where there are less barriers faced by the girls. An innovation in our planned pilot work is parental engagement in careers advice in schools which is a relatively new approach for any type of careers support for the majority of young people from a variety of backgrounds across the UK. We are pleased that the public sector and NGOs wish to work with us on this innovation to be led by girls with their parents. Our current work also includes engaging proactively with employers, aiming to remove certain barriers for girls in the short to medium term, to improve diversity in the workplace in the long term and to profile role models.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> Desk research over five months was undertaken by Revealing Reality in 2017, reviewing local sources of information, especially from public sector bodies in Greater Manchester and Lancashire, national sources of information, including Government policy and statistics, and also international sources, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and international NGOs.

# Briefing on Her Untapped Potential

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**We will deliver in partnership in line with our Theory of Change of better integrated communities through social mobility**



It is quite stressful, applying for uni and doing my PGCE, and as my parents haven't been through it, they don't understand. I have no one to speak to about it and so it knocks my confidence.

*South Asian girl interviewee living in the North West*



## **Our Recommendations to Stakeholders**

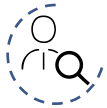
To achieve our aims we make four primary recommendations across sectors nationally, though primarily in the North West, which are as follows:

1. Focus the social and economic mobility of girls and young women of South Asian heritage at the heart of local and national integration agendas;
2. Listen and communicate directly with girls of South Asian heritage, using the channels and influencers that speak to them;
3. Improve coordination of social and economic mobility interventions available to girls now, especially schools career advice and support;
4. Innovate and fund to test and scale interventions that bridge community, parental influence education and employment support.



... addressing economic opportunity for all is a key pillar to better integration.

*The Greater Manchester Community Cohesion Commission*



## **Our Role**

Savannah Wisdom Foundation wishes to play two philanthropic roles in this work:

- As a convener, working in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector, particularly in line with the national Government's Integrated Communities strategy and the work of the Greater Manchester (GM) Community Cohesion Commission;
- As a supporter of innovations for the primary benefit of a number of South Asian girls and young women in the North West who are facing barriers to employment with the aim for those innovations to be scaled up in partnership and by others

Our strategic focus will be on the inclusive growth gained via the economic and social mobility of South Asian girls and young women which will result in greater community cohesion.

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## Specific recommendations by sector

Our specific **recommendations to the Public Sector** are outlined below, especially to the Government's Integrated Communities Strategy nationally and to the GM Commission. We are delighted that our recent initial discussions with the Commission have resulted in their consideration of our research findings and our recommendations to them for future work in partnership. Our specific **recommendations to employers in the Private Sector** are outlined below with the intent to increase diversity, ensure inclusivity in the workplace and to explore partnerships.

	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3	Recommendation 4
<b>Sector</b>	Focus girls' social and economic mobility at the heart of local and national integration agendas	Listen and communicate directly with girls using the channels and influencers speaking to them	Improve coordination of social and economic mobility interventions available to girls now	Innovate and fund to test and scale interventions that bridge community, parental influence, education and employment
<b>Recommendations to the Public Sector</b>	<p>Improve the quality and longevity of careers advice and support in schools and communities with improved partnerships with employers to bridge the skills gap, especially for BAME communities</p> <p>Focus on careers support and enterprise schemes for marginalised girls and young women from BAME communities</p>	Work with community champions of South Asian heritage communities to highlight for girls female role models who have made alternative choices, supported by their families and community	<p>Improve the co-ordination of careers advice and support in schools and communities in with a particular focus on BAME young people from all backgrounds and education and attainment levels</p> <p>Build stronger networks, especially with schools, colleges, universities and employers to encourage diverse and inclusive places in education and employment</p>	Through multi-year interventions, engage families in raising their awareness of a broad set of life options for girls, such as via workshops and community events. A need to promote more widely a diversity of skills development options, such as studying away from home or raising the status of Apprenticeship
<b>Recommendations to the Private Sector</b>	Strive for a more diverse workforce, adopting social mobility employer best practice	Proactively tackle issues of discrimination in the workplace	Offer work experience schemes more widely to diverse communities, including reaching out to schools	Consider and potentially deliver opt-in workforce diversity public reporting

We will support work in communities via the voluntary sector to:

- Deliver inter-community and inter-generational activities to bring young people and their families together to look to the future;
- Use Role Models and mentoring within communities and at home to increase the confidence in girls and young women for their future and provide assurance for their families



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## **A convener and supporter of innovations**

We are now developing in partnership pilot studies that will support our initiative to help South Asian women stay in meaningful employment for longer.

Our current in progress pilot work focuses upon:

- Partnerships with Charitable/NGO Schemes and Schools/Community Hubs;
- Exploration of a digital campaign, including reaching girls in their homes via digital tools and profiling role models with them, learning from NGO and commercial best practice

Our early stage pilot work through networks and partnerships includes:

- Convening Greater Manchester bodies, national partners and interested parties for impact;
- Filling and bridging gaps in careers service co-ordination and provision;
- Defining and building the relationship between local/national Government and philanthropy;
- A contribution to the work of the GM Community Cohesion Commission, aiming to work with city region communities and employers;
- A response to the national Government consultation on their Integrated Communities Green Paper, referencing their Measures Framework and being proactive in learning exchanges within the Strategy

Our social impact measurement approach for this work references Government Integrated Communities Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals measurement approaches. Further information on our first pilot is available later in this briefing report.



*... I want to take advantage of every opportunity.*

***South Asian girl interviewee living in the North West***

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## **Our Pilot Principles**

Based on our research we will follow five best practice principles in designing and delivering our pilot work:

1. Parental engagement to raise their awareness of the wide variety of future employment opportunities and the related potential pathways for their daughters;
2. Medium term interventions whilst in education for girls to build their pathway to future employment;
3. Variety of quality and co-ordinated training and skills development to enable girls to make choices, supported by their parents and communities;
4. Engagement with employers to offer a wider variety of schools careers interventions and achieve a diverse workplace in the longer term;
5. Role model involvement to inspire girls and assure parents in appropriate future employment opportunities

This approach aims to also tackle an overall issue for many young people of a poorly co-ordinated careers service in the UK with isolated work undertaken by organisations and one-off short-term interventions as well as introducing parental engagement for the first time. These five principles align with the Gatsby Career Benchmarks recommended to schools by Government to improve careers advice for all young people.



## **Piloting our approach in Schools in 2018/19**

Informed by our research we are currently developing and delivering an in-schools pilot in Greater Manchester which contains a youth skills programme over two school years for specific groups of girls and their peers with an additional parental engagement element. The pilot is being delivered with one school year group across two schools, primarily supporting girls of South Asian heritage, though also their wider school year group via group activities and in conjunction with their families.

To complement this a local employer mentoring and work experience programme will be offered to students which may lead onto work placement offers for the girls. This multiple intervention approach aims to achieve our best practice principles and deliver at least five of the eight Gatsby Career Benchmarks.

An evaluation of the pilot will be available in autumn 2019 and a second stage pilot is planned for 2019/20.

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**Pilot in Partnership with**



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## First Stage Pilot in 2018/19

Savannah Wisdom's pilot in partnership in 2018/19 focuses on the 15 - 18 age group due to our research findings. Manchester's youth population is made up of around 43,000 people aged 10–17 years, including 22,400 White British and 7,900 Asian young people which is nearly 20% of this youth population. (Manchester City Council, 2016). The pilot will primarily work with girls of South Asian heritage, though will include whole school class or year group activities, such as Challenge Days and Business Trips, to offer benefits to other students and opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to work together on future employment skills in a cohesive way.

The developing pilot will focus on supporting girls to plan their move into employment in the future for which they face the most barriers, rather than focusing solely on continuous education where there are less barriers faced by the girls.

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“ *When doing work experience . . . I shadowed a woman who really inspired me. She was doing so much and really helping.*”

*South Asian girl interviewee living in the North West*

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As mentioned, a key innovation in this work is parental engagement which does not feature in any typical careers support programme, despite parents of all backgrounds and cultures being the biggest influence on young people's employment choices. Our focus will not only aim to improve parents' awareness of wider employment options, but also create more opportunities for girls of South Asian heritage and their parents to support each other and work together on discussing and planning the girls' future employment pathway, aiming to remove any barriers that they face with the pilot's support.

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“ *I don't like being away from home...I get anxious about getting lost and not knowing anyone. My Mum always says 'that once you've got your degree, you can do what you want.'*”

*South Asian girl interviewee living in the North West*

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The programme will offer mentoring and work placements to prepare girls for the real world of work, linked to their studies. Via these interventions we aim to engage with employers to offer quality mentoring and work experience to girls facing barriers, and through this engagement aim to improve attitudes and policies related to equality & diversity in the workplace.

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## Looking Ahead

As we develop our work into a pilot phase we will explore further education to employment schemes, and engage with community projects, academic study and employer-led schemes. Our first school pilot ends in autumn 2019 and we currently plan to extend the pilot with new school year groups and/or more schools in 2019/20. We will also be exploring a potential campaign and policy work.

This report, any further research and the results of our pilots will be shared with partners and across sectors at least on an annual basis and especially via the new national Cohesion and Integration Network (COIN).

Our philanthropic work aims to achieve the economic and social mobility of South Asian women by removing barriers and giving broader opportunities to South Asian girls, supported by their families, during their journey from education to employment.

We will achieve better integrated communities through social mobility.

### Savannah Wisdom Foundation

<https://savannahwisdom.org>

For more information, please contact the Foundation at [admin@savannahwisdom.org](mailto:admin@savannahwisdom.org)



# About Savannah Wisdom Foundation

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Savannah Wisdom is an independent charitable foundation. Our projects are based around social inequality, tackling issues such as corruption in the delivery of healthcare and gender rights by investing in women and girls at local community level in India and the UK.

The Foundation does this by partnering with a number of charities and not for profit organisations with innovative and radical ideas that try to disrupt the traditional model for delivering change. Savannah Wisdom's CEO, Shalni Arora, also manages the B&M Community Fund, part of the Corporate and Social Responsibility division at B&M Retail Plc.

Our work in the UK is mostly focused on projects that remove barriers to social mobility, particularly for South Asian women and young girls. We also look to offer social protection mechanisms to those vulnerable in our community, and support projects that build bridges between communities.

Savannah Wisdom's focus in India is on issues around gender equality and the societal support and change women need to see so that they feel empowered and also protected by the state. We partner with NGOs who are keen on changing mindsets and projects with game changing initiatives in the areas of legal rights, trafficking and child protection. In particular, Savannah Wisdom is keen to find ways to re-balance the inequality in access to legal rights faced by women in India in cases of sexual and domestic violence. Addressing this inequality is a step towards building the social contract giving women dignity and freedom.

Further information can be found at <https://savannahwisdom.org> or by contacting the Foundation at [admin@savannahwisdom.org](mailto:admin@savannahwisdom.org)

**This briefing report was authored by philanthropy and social policy advisor Cathy Elliott on behalf of Savannah Wisdom Foundation.**

**This report is the intellectual property of Savannah Wisdom Foundation, in partnership with UBS Optimus Foundation.**

March 2019



Shalni Arora, CEO of  
Savannah Wisdom  
Foundation

# About UBS Optimus Foundation

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The UBS Optimus Foundation is unique as the only foundation linked to a global wealth manager staffed with philanthropy experts. With an approach that takes advantage of our unique network, we're taking a leading role in driving impactful philanthropy that delivers breakthrough solutions to pressing social issues. But we know that solving social problems requires collaborative initiatives that make real impact on a large scale. So, we're taking smart risks on evidence-based, scalable solutions with diverse partners, improving health, education and child protection systems – as this is the best path to solving a wide range of the world's most pressing social issues.

Effective philanthropy requires **collaboration**, **strategic partnerships** and **sustainable scaling**.

- We're bringing individual philanthropists, leading philanthropic organizations, UBS's finance experts and employees, frontline partners, enterprise, academics and governments together to solve problems with optimal impact.
- Our standout partners are on the frontline – they know, and can build, the power of communities affected. We're helping them build capacity so they can get the best outcomes for children's health, education and protection.
- We always have an evidence-based strategy for exit. So we're driving long-term social impact and systemic change, creating lasting solutions to social issues. Successful programs are driven forward to scale with social finance, government buy-in and advocacy.

Philanthropists choose to work with us because we take their passions personally, providing a variety of giving options and taking that journey with them. And they know that because of our expertise, innovation and network, we're successfully finding bold solutions to social issues, giving them the powerful impact they want.

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### Note:

- 1 Desk research over five months was undertaken by Revealing Reality in 2017, reviewing local sources of information, especially from public sector bodies in Greater Manchester and Lancashire, national sources of information, including Government policy and statistics, and also international sources, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and international NGOs.