**Archive Reference: 2018\_esch\_GrOG\_06**

*Interviewer: Francis Ball*

Interviewee: PalvinderKhudail

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Palvinder Khudail**

**Project: Growing Old Gracefully**

**Date of interview: 28.04.18**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Common room of Palvinder’s apartment block, Shoreditch**

**Name of interviewer: Francis Ball**

**Length of interview: 1hr 12mins 15secs**

**Transcribed by: Jo Law and Francis Ball**

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*Ok, so it’s the 28th of April and I’m interviewing Palvinder in the common room of her apartment block in Shoreditch as part of the Subco project. Um could you give me your date of birth please?*

Um six, three, sixty two.

*And where were you born?*

I was born in London, in west London…

*Ahha*

Um Southall, so I was born and brought up in Southall. Hillingdon hospital to be precise [laughs]

*Excellent. Um I’m presuming your family lived um, sort of in Southall at the time?*

Yep. My family, all my family were, most of my family were in, in Southall at the time, yea.

*What did your parents do when you were growing up?*

Um, my parents were um, business people, so my Dad had um, a shop on Southall Broadway? It was one of the first um Asian shops on Southall Broadway, er, because he came here in the um, 50s um, and um initially started doing door to door um, like sales person type stuff before he got enough money to set up shop. So yea, we had , he had a range of shops on Southall Broadway.

*Was there a, a presumably quite a big Asian community in that area at the time?*

Massive

*Yea*

Massive, yea, yea it was very, very, predominately Asian. Lots of Asian influence, um, yea it was interesting place, very interesting place. Um, marked in history in some ways because of um the subsequent sort of, you know, the troubles we had around race and the riots that took place, um and killing of Blair Peach, so it’s kind of marked with history, Southal as a place to be. You know

*Yea. Is that something you were aware of from quite an early age, like any kind of tension, or was it something you came…*

Um, I think when I was growing up I, I didn’t feel any tension and I think that was probably, probably because lived in Southall. I think the first time I noticed something was when I went to college actually, and my, one of my tutors said something to me that always stuck in my mind, he said, “You’re not Asian, you’re British” and I didn’t quite understand what that meant, until quite, you know, later on, I was confused by it actually, cos I was Asian. I was born here but that didn’t mean it, you know, I was born here end of. I didn’t think of it other than, you know, I’m in an Asian community, I spoke English and Punjabi so I was Asian. Um, but I didn’t experience any, any racism when I was growing up at all and in fact, you know um, we had quite good relationships in the community partly because my Dad had been there so long, um in the Caribbean community, everyone kind of knew my Dad, um and they knew the shops you know, they kind of knew him so well in a way that we used to give credit routinely, you know, so you could take something and then pay for it later on? And there was this ledger, this book that we kept for years actually, in fact I remember using it as well, because we had cust, kind of customers who would come, you know, every time their son or daughter was getting married buy their stuff and they would buy on credit and then they would come in, you know, sometimes weekly to pay some of that off? It was all kept manually, you know so he’d, quite, you know, really good relationships in the community.

I think it was when I was a teenager that um, we were, you pick up lots when you’re running the shops and stuff and I used to work there on a Saturday, or go there on a Saturday, had to go there and help out and um, we heard, there were some rumours going around that there was some trouble down on the Broadway itself with some of the shopkeepers um, and we didn’t think anything of it other than, you know, there was something going on, um and then that evening um, we, we all went home shut up shop, went home and we heard lots of commotion so we lived on Ranelagh Road, which is um, very, very close to Hambrough pub, which is where that incident took place with the skinheads. Um so, me and my Mum were looking out the window, um and could see the Broadway and we saw loads of people sort of gathering, so me and my Mum stupidly went out and to have a look, you know, ‘cos we’re all local people and we were just gathering, gathered there watching and every, wondering what’s going on and then all of a sudden um there was a petrol bomb um went off, everyone just scattered and [laughs] I was running back with my Mum trying to get home. So we all, we all went inside and it just kicked off from there and we were up most of the night um, because our shops were on the Broadway and we could see from our road that there was stuff going on the Broadway but we didn’t go out and then of course, you know we got the alarm went off at the shops. At 3o’clock in the morning I remember, you know, walking to the shop with my par, my Mum and my Dad and my brothers, um I didn’t recognise the place anymore because, you know the um, you know, just things like the walls that were there were knocked down, you know, everything just looked different, out shop was smashed up um, and it, the, the place was so busy but it was busy, it was all reporters. So we, you know, we sorted our shop out and came back, but, that was, I remember it 3 o’clock in the morning and the next day when we left, you know went out couldn’t recognise Southall Broadway again in the day, in the daytime either. So that was my first experience of it um, and you know, when I reflected on it sort of a year later I thought actually that was the best thing that happened because, not, not in terms of the incident but in terms of raising awareness and um the strength then of, of specially the younger people there in Southall to say “We can’t, this is not acceptable anymore.” So what I realised was it was happening a lot but, you know, people were just, you know, ignoring it.

*Yea*

Um, and then I got involved with um, Southall Youth Movement? And er, my parents didn’t know, cos they didn’t want me to get involved in any of that sort of stuff and with Southall Rights, so I used to go and do voluntary work secretly, you know, just walk down the road and say I was going somewhere and I’d go and do some voluntary work. So that was my first taste of any kind of politics?

*Wow, would you mind um explaining a bit more about those organisations please?*

Yea, sure. So um there was, there was a famous organisation called um I think it was IWA, Indian Workers Association, but it was always made up of older people? You know, and I know my Dad knew people who were, you know, were involved and they, they, so that was my sort of like, well they’re quite political, you know, but I, I couldn’t relate to them, um and there was this thing called Southall Youth Movement that I started to read about and um, I’d, how did I get involved? I know how I got involved. So um, I first got involved with Southall Rights because um, a friend of mine, who’s like a brother, kind of introduces me to it, and he was really encouraging of everyone, you know, so he encouraged me to come and do some voluntary work there. So, you know, I would go in and, so I’d meet, met some people there who were solicitors mainly or had law as their background and they would give, give advice to people coming in for all sorts of things [coughs] and er, and then they would get, er, you know, they would get involved in some kind of campaign and I would help do banners and things cos it, you know, I was quite young, you know, so it was just voluntary work and I would make cups of tea for people, you know, but I was in that environment where I was beginning to become aware of, you know, stuff that I wasn’t aware of before.

Um, so Southall Rights was, and then from Southall Rights I heard about um, er Southall Youth Movement which was on the other side of Southall, we used, they, they used to be, Southall used to be called Southall and Old Southall, yea um, and so it was the other side but it was nearer um, it was an area that I familiar with ‘cos I went to school on that side of Southall. So again I got, kind of got interested in, so I went to some meetings and I ended up on the management committee um but it was quite difficult then because, one, um, there weren’t any young women involved in that organisation, it was very, very male dominated and there was also a little bit of tension between some um of the existing Asian members and Caribbean members um and although it was called Southall Youth Movement the people that were involved were actually older, older people. So we came along as this fresh, you know, we don’t want any of these tensions between Asians, Caribbeans, we’re all black, you know, we’re all facing the same sort of issues and managed somehow to get rid of them, you know, um, and so I got involved in Southall Youth Movement, again not my parents knew, none of, none of, none of that. Um, and then of course when all that stuff kicked off in Southall these organisations were the ones who were kind of quite heavily involved in, you know, supporting people.

So that’s how I got into sort of politics and I remember um I was at Southall, at Southall Rights one day and um, I suppose um, my first campaign that I got involved with was a disaster. So I got involved and it was, I’ll never forget it, it’s called er, ‘Save Cheema’ Cheema was the name of the bloke, and I think it was about him being deported, yea it was about him being deported. So I whole heartedly, you know, helped with this campaign, did banners went out and de,de,der and then we found out that actually he’d been he was a perpetrator of domestic abuse. So kind of that was another then, you know, like ‘Oh my God’ you know, we, we were all, you know, it wasn’t just me, obviously I was just, you know, a kind of follower at that stage but even all the kind of senior people involved in that campaign it was just like ‘Woe,’ you know, this is, you know, we’ve got to learn from this’, we should never have supported this guy, you know, he was beating his wife up, you know, so that was another bit that was like ‘Oh my God’ you know.

So that was, that was a bit of um a learning curve for all of us and then um there was all sorts of things happening in Newham and I never knew Newham cos I was kind of, you know, I never, I never went any far, I was in Southall, you know, and um, there was a campaign that was called Newham Seven, you’ve probably heard of it, it was quite famous, and um, I thought “God, how am I going a, how am I going a get to Newham?” I can’t tell my parents I’m, I’m going there, they won’t like me getting involved um, and um, what I did was I took my niece who was only about 5 years old [laughs] at the time and um, so on, so I said to them “Oh, I’m taking her out for the day”, you know, so took, I took her along and I got on this coach and we went to Newham. I’d no, I didn’t think about the fact, “Oh my God what am I taking her to?” you know, and it was a big demonstration and er, but I taught my niece how to say “Newham Seven” in a certain, you know, and I told her not to say anything to her when we got back, which was a bit naughty but I did, um and, we had, we had a great time.

So yea, then it was that taste of politics outside of, outside of Southall, you know, kind of a bit more of the bigger picture. Um, and then you know, er, because of my own experience, you know, what happened at home with me, um and me leaving home and all of that I ended up in east London, you know, um, and then of course, you know, er I carried on, you know getting involved in, or staying involved in, in politics.

*What were the difference between um leaving in west and east London?*

Um, I think I was, it was a bit, it was a bit difficult for me at the time, because um, I’d left home under a cloud, so I was still um, I was still doing my degree in east London um, and I, I left home kind of quite suddenly cos I fell out with my parents and it was all very difficult, you know, because I didn’t know anyone really, um, and um, I didn’t know the area, I didn’t know east London, apart from, you know, I used to go to uni there but I didn’t, I didn’t live, I didn’t um, stay in campus or anything, um, I kind of commuted from, from Southall. So I didn’t know the area, so it was a bit of a, bit of a shock. Um, yea it was different, it didn’t feel as cosy? As Southall. Erm, didn’t feel familiar. Erm, but, you know, I, I made friends, erm, particularly through, erm, my first job in, in, which was in Newham, actually, when, after I graduated, in the housing department. Erm, and, er, you know, I, I met people who were political, erm, and also the job I went into, my first job even though I, I graduated as a, a qualified social worker, was in race equality, so I was race equality officer in the housing department. And, you know, you know, politics, I realised, you know, politics was quite a big thing in Newham, partly because of, erm, the campaigns and Newham Monitoring Project, which was central. So Newham Monitoring Project was probably one of the first organisations that I got to know, you know, and, you know, I still, I still have friends, you know, who from that organisation now. People like Unmesh were central to that, but, you know, I don’t have anything to do with him. But, you know, there I people that I have lots to do with now, very, very close.

*Erm, so when did you get involved with Newham Monitoring Project? What sort of…*

So it was…

*… spurred that?*

It was, it was, erm, quite soon into my first job. So my first job in Newham was in 1988, so, erm, as race equality officer in housing in Forest Gate. Erm, and pretty much, pretty much, erm, got involved with Newham Monitoring Project straight away.

**[INTERVIEW REDACTED]**

*What sort of, erm, work did you do with them, or sort of campaigns were you involved with?*

So, erm, obviously I had to be a little, well, both of us had to be a little bit careful because we were employees of the local authority, but when we were in the housing department there was no, erm, er, things, there wasn’t anything that we didn’t, you know, that was in conflict with the council, because, at the time, the council funded NMP, erm, but obviously didn’t like them very much because NMP were campaigning, you know? But we, at the time I remember we freely got involved with all sorts of campaigns, erm, you know, in our personal time, erm, with Newham Monitoring Project, and in the workspace, anything we did, it was, it was, er, with Newham Monitoring Project in mind, and it was, it wasn’t a problem. So, erm, there was a lot of connectivity with Newham Monitoring Project. They, they, erm… Although, you know, it started off very much as a police campaigning, erm, organisation, it did have an interest in housing interest, you know? For example, you know, where, you know, if there was discrimination against black tenants and that sorts of, you know, that sort of thing. So they were, they were a big influence actually on the work, certainly the work I was doing in the housing department. Erm, yeah. So we got involved in all sorts. All the campaigns we would get involved in because those people then became friends, you know, quite quickly. So, erm, you know, we would see them socially, you know, they were round my house. Erm, you know we would see them all the time, you know? Weekends or whatever. And, erm, you know, we weren’t… Even though I worked in the council, I wasn’t excluded from, you know, getting involved with, er, Newham Monitoring Project. As long as I didn’t put my name to an article, you know, that was against the council or anything like that, erm, I was… But otherwise, yeah, got involved. And, you know, Newham Monitoring Project, erm, you know, they would speak to us if they wanted some information that we could share with them, you know? What’s going on in the council, that sort of thing. You know, I think my allegiance to Newham Monitoring Project was quite strong.

*Yeah. Did the council have links with other sort of community organisations like that? Or was it mainly…?*

Erm, no I think there was, erm, I can’t remember the name, but there was a, erm… You know like in most authorities they have an umbrella type organisation—I can’t remember what it was called in Newham, but they did have one… I mean they weren’t as strong in terms of campaigning, erm, and there were quite a lot of community organisations in Newham, actually. Erm, but they weren’t.. I don’t think there was any organisation that was similar to NMP, you know, in terms of, you know, they would campaign, and stick their neck out, and say stuff, you know, that I think, I think other organisations, you know, wouldn’t. You know, they would toe the line, or they would be more worried about their funding, or, you know, they might be in, in, you know, with some of the councillors. So I know that… Can’t remember the names of the organisations, but, you know, sometimes it was tension between, you know, NMP and some other organisations because the stand they took.

*MmmHmm.*

But, you know, there was quite a lot of organisations in Newham.

*Right.*

And you know, at the time.

*Erm, with NMP, how did the, sort of, erm, struggle for racial equality work with sot of Black and Asian communities, or was it, kind of, all together sort of thing.*

It was generally… I would say it was quite strong together, you know, and, erm, pretty much I think reflective, er, in terms of the workers and people on management committee—certainly from the people I know, erm, that were on it—I don’t know the ins and outs in terms of there might’ve been some tensions along the way, but I think, generally, it was, it was an organisation that,. erm, you, you know, that was unified in that sense pretty much quite a lot, you know, a lot in terms of… When I, when I was involved with them, certainly it was, erm, strong. You know, there, there weren’t tensions. I mean I don’t know along the way if there have been tensions. There might’ve been. But, erm, no: pretty much solid, solid. We were really clearly, I remember, at the time, you know, erm, even in the terminology we used, it was like, ‘We’re all Black’, you know, polit-, ‘In the political sense, we’re all black.’

*Yeah.*

Erm, so, yeah. It was good. It was really good. That was a nice thing about it.

*Yeah, there must’ve been quite a lot of camaraderie I guess as well if you were a bit more radical on certain issues as well.*

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Erm, yeah I was really, I was really impressed with that bit. Because I grew up, you know, in Southall, and there wasn’t any tension between Asians and Caribbean, and Caribbean people, when I was growing up. I’m not saying there hasn’t been or anything, but there wasn’t, and certainly my, my family situation it wasn’t. My dad had really, you know, strong links with Caribbean community. In fact, at one point it was… I think it was just before I was born, but I remember that family really, really well. And they, there was a Caribbean family, it was like mixed parentage so, erm, I think the, the guy was Caribbean and his wife was white. But they used to live in our house, rent, er, you know, rented basis. So, you know, it was… Yeah, my dad got on… So I lived, I grew up, there were, you know, we were all black.

*Yeah.*

You know? Erm, but, you know, I’m sure, erm, there might’ve been tensions within NMP, but not when I was there, not that I picked up and noticed.

*Did you enjoy working for the council?*

Erm, did I like, en-… I did actually, I really did. I’ve enjoyed all my jobs to this day, erm, but I really enjoyed working for the council. I was, erm… I mean there were bits that I hated about the council, but it was, you know, that, my, my first job, you know, after graduating, er, not having much money ‘cos I’d left home, so, you know, I’d left home with nothing, erm, and, er, I think my first salary was about £10,000, and I thought, ‘Wow! That’s amazing!’ you know? Erm, and, you know, it was a completely new, you know, race equality. My background was I’d just graduated in social work, and I ended up in the housing department. Erm, so, so that bit was, yeah, it was good. I learnt a lot about housing that I didn’t know. And then I did think after two years, I thought, ‘What am I doing here with a social work qualification?’ so then I got a job in the same council, but then it was called Social Services then, as policy advisor for race equality. So it was, it was a promotion, ‘cos, erm, erm, you would have race equality officers in, in most of the, not all the departments, but different structures, but housing probably had the most solid one because they had one for every kind of area, so there were about ten. And then there was a policy advisor. And, and each department had a policy advisor. So I moved into Social Services into the policy advisor role. And then I ended up staying there for, erm, eleven years. Erm, and some of that was because then I had kids, I got married and had children, and it was just convenient being there, erm, for childcare and everything. But, also that I, I, in when I was in Social Services, I moved around different roles, so, erm, I wasn’t in one role all the time. It was… I loved it.

*Could you explain the difference in the work you were doing from when you were an equality officer to when you were a, erm…*

Policy advisor.

*Policy advisor.*

Yeah, it was quite different. So in the housing department I was, kind of, responsible for one area, which was Forest Gate. That was kind of like my area. Erm, and it was working with tenants organisations, doing some development work with them, it was, erm, sitting on recruitment panels in the council, and, you know, making sure there was no discrimination in that, in that process. Erm, getting involved in policies and procedures, you know, making sure that race equality was, you know, being addressed, providing advice to the area manager at the time, sitting on the management team… All that kind of stuff. Erm, and then when I moved into policy advisor at Social Services… It was really different because their structure was really different. So they had, erm, they called it an Ethnic Minorities Team, which was, erm, a small group of social workers who, erm… I suppose they were equivalent to the race equality officers, but they were working in a completely different area, and, you know, it was working with, erm, social work teams, and providing advice around care as opposed to housing issues. And my role as a policy advisor was, erm, sitting on then the director-, directorate management team as opposed to an area team—so for the whole of Social Services—erm, and, and it was just broader in terms of, erm, you know, getting involved in, in more corporate type, you know, policy issues. Erm, and, I mean at the time, my predecessor didn’t have a very good relationship with the ethnic minorities team, erm, and then she left, I came in and did a bit of a restructure, but they weren’t happy. They weren’t happy with anyone, basically. Erm, and it got quite difficult for me at the time, because, erm, the unions got involved, because they weren’t, they weren’t—the team—weren’t happy with the restructure. So there was a half day strike that took place, so I felt quite vulnerable, erm, at the time. And the team, the ethnic minority team, had been there for a really long time, and they were all close and friends and stuff. I don’t think I was doing anything to, erm… You know, they weren’t going to lose their jobs. What I was trying to do was put some structure in place, ‘cos they had no job descriptions, ‘cos they’d been there from time. And they just didn’t like it. They didn’t like it. And one by one they just left. Which was probably good for them because some of them went on to do some great things, you know. Erm, so, so then we did put structure in place. And the structure we put in place was, in a way, similar to what I had in housing, which did seem to work. Which was having, erm, you know, equality officers in covering each area of, of social services. And Taskin was one of ‘em actually.

*Oh wow.*

She was one of my members of staff.

*Oh!*

Yeah. And, erm, there’s another woman who Taskin will remember, erm, called Anna Wan. She’s, she’s, erm, not around any, now, she’s, she lives in Germany, but, I mean hopefully it will come up later on because,. Because, you know, in SubCo there was, erm, the Chinese elders bit of it as well, and Anna was quite involved with, with that. So I had a team then of race equality officers, erm, and, erm, that worked well, obviously, until, erm… I can’t remember the sequence but I did quite a few roles there. I moved on to, er, doing, er, commissioning role, so managing the commissioning and contracting team. So this was a team of people who, erm, would, erm, get involved in any kind of European funding initiatives. Erm, they would administer all the gr-, it was grants at the time, all the grants, erm, put in place, erm, you know, the service level agreements, erm, do the monitoring of the grants, and also there was a, er, an arm, which we called ‘provider development’, so it was providing developments to organisations as well. Erm, so, so that, that was the kind of difference in terms… It was just a different market if you like, you know, it wasn’t housing any more. Erm, but we, you know, we kept in touch with… NMP was still then, you know, quite well known, and we carried on doing the political stuff as well, but I suppose NMP weren’t as engaged or as involved at, as they were with housing issues with, with social services, for obviously reasons, you know?

*So what sort of issues were Social Services focussing on?*

So it was, erm… Some of the similar things to housing, like recruitment policies and procedures. Erm, but the big area was around, erm, erm, racism from service users. And the bit that is really complex in, in, in social services in that area of work is, you know, on the one hand you’re providing a statutory service to someone, erm, and what do you do if they’re racist? You know? I mean blatantly racist, so, you know, a lot of the service users—not a lot of the service users, some of the service users were racist—what do you do? Erm, you can’t, erm, say to them, ‘No, you can’t have a service anymore.’ Because, you know, you’d get in trouble because it was a statutory service, but what you can do is put procedures in place to challenge them, you know, and, and, and be able to say to them, ‘I’m, I’m not going to deal with you now’, or, ‘This is, this is wrong’ and have some sort of reporting mechanism around it. So it was putting those sorts of things in place. Erm, so that was one bit. The second bit was around, erm, er, you know, developing organisations, erm, and making sure there was equality in terms of who gets funding and who doesn’t get funding. Erm, and that, that became a bigger issue, erm, because even if, erm, we said, ‘Okay, we’re going to look at how, you know, we distribute funding’, if there isn’t a Black organisation in case then they’re not going to get funding, are they? No. And there was a big need to fill some gaps, you know, in the community based on some of the issues that were coming up in, in Social Services. So for example, erm, you know, Female Genital Mutilation: I remember a time, er, when I was in Newham, it was, it was a brand new thing then, it’s not any more, it’s a brand new thing and there, there were some organisations around, but there weren’t in Newham. Erm, and we, you know, we helped set one up, you know? I remember being personally involved in developing an organisation around FGM, Female Genital Mutilation. Erm, and there were, there were a couple of other examples as well.

*What sort of work would it take to develop an organisation like that?*

So it was… And that’s where you get out of your, erm, your, you, you, you sort of have your local authority hat on, but actually you’re doing some of the, you know, campaigning but in a different wat. So what, what we did, erm, and there was a couple of examples around, around where, erm, you, you had lots of links with people in the community anyway, erm, and you would, sort of, encourage them and say, ‘Look, we will help you and guide you, erm, to set-up a management committee,’ for example, erm, ‘So you can you get, you know, can you get your colleagues, can you get your groups together, you know, and, and see who, who might take up some of these roles.’ Erm, so we would, erm, you know, my officers, for example, would, would, would, help them. They would give them some draft documents that they might, you know, mirror their organisation on, help them write, you know, what, what sort of services they would provide, erm, and then say to them, ‘Look, you now need to have your kind of first AGM’, if you like, ‘And when you get your AGM we will help you and give you advice only in terms of how you might bid for a grant.’ Erm, and then, you know…

*They’re sort of up-and-running.*

Yeah. Well, what we did this massive piece of work in Newham when I was there, erm, because there was quite a lot of organisations who received money historically, you know, for years, established organisations, and they had councillor networks, you know, and there was, there was no real, erm… Sometimes the purpose of those organisations weren’t clear, and it’s because they’d just be getting money every year. They were used to it. And, erm, there were some organisations that were a little bit iffy, you know? Now, I can’t remember the name of one of them, but there were definitely a couple where you thought, ‘Actually, what do they actually provide and…?’ and, you know, ‘Why are we even giving them the money? It doesn’t even fit with, you know, anything anymore, our vision of, of the council anymore. Why are we giving them money?’ Erm, and, also, you know, a lot of them were white, white based organisations, you know? Erm, so although there was quite a lot of money around there was still, you know, a limit on how much there was in the pot. Erm, and so how, how can you, how can you balance it if you don’t change the existing, you know, erm, sector? So what we did, and it was quite an, it was quite a challenge for me, erm, what we decided, and we got—I’ll tell you how we got the support to do it—is what we said is, ‘Right, everything, every, every, erm, grant, now, erm, we’re gonna, gonna take eighteen months to do it—so we had a plan for eighteen months—everything is gonna now, everyone’s gonna have to rebid for everything, okay? And it’s gonna be based on a commissioning plan, so we’re going to set up a plan, erm, setting up what we need and why. So we won’t be naming organisations, we’ll just be naming what service we want, you know, based on data, based on what we need. And, and everything is gonna be recommissioned,’ if you like, ‘and, and people can apply for it. And they’ll have to bid for it. Erm,’ they’ll have to, erm, come for interviews,’ erm, you know, ‘We’re going to go for a whole process of doing it.’ Which is why it took eighteen months. And I remember, in my office, I had this, erm, erm, just sheets of paper, all along the wall, with, erm, I mean, you know, nowadays you would do it on, erm, a Gantt chart, but it was like, ‘Right, this month we’re gonna be doing this, this month…’ And all the way along we had, erm, er, development workshops and things. So our plan was that, in some areas—for example, one of the new areas was supporting, supporting ethnic minority families who are going through the child protection process—we knew that there wasn’t anyone out there who can do that, so that will need development, but we put aside a pot of money for it. So, so in this plan that went along my wall, we had everything in there from, you know, when we would go to committee, when we would, erm, you know, er, do a workshop, when we might… you know? All the way along, you know? That’s why it took eighteen months. But because everything around the grant system was so political, erm, the way I got through it, you know, and it wasn’t easy, was I went to committee every so often. So every time I went to committee with a report they signed up to it. So if they said later on—because, you know, there was a lot of influence around—if they said, ‘Well, no, no, no.’ Well, actually, you signed up to it! So all the way along I went to committee telling people, telling members what I was doing, what we were doing—and supported by Deborah Cameron anyway, so supported by the director… Erm and it did, it changed the profile, actually, but it caused a lot of angst because some organisations did not get any money. And we had pickets on… I called it rent-a-crowd, we had camp-, we had people coming to committee. I was, I was not popular, you know with, you know, with, with some people, actually. Erm, but we did change the profile and with, with like the FGM organisation, for example, what we, what we said is that, you know, we’d, we’d keep that pot of money, erm, they’d still have to bid for it, erm, but I, I remember there’s went out a bit late, you know, because by the time you get developed you have to wait for the first AGM before you can duh duh duh, and then they bid for it. So it was all, it was… And we did, we did have a different profile, you know, in the community. We did get some organisations who did lose out, some of the old, traditional organisations. So, yeah, it was… yeah, so I did… So I think you were saying, ‘Did I enjoy the local authority.’ It was tough.

*Yeah.*

But it was, it was great.

*Was it quite novel that, erm, local authorities would have, erm, departments and people, er, looking at issues around race, or was that well established by the time you were working there?*

No it wasn’t, not Social Services at all. Erm, no, I’ll qualify that: so the Ethnic Minorities Team, who’d been there for a long time…

**[INTERVIEW REDACTED]**

… if a social worker did something they didn’t like, you know, they’d go in, go in heavy. And I kinda got that, but I also thought, ‘Actually, you need to provide support for social workers. They need,’ you know, ‘to encourage them to change their practice, as opposed to just go gunning for them. Erm, so it was established in the sense that, you know, the team were there, but I’m not sure if everyone was sensitised to race equality type issues because, erm, sometimes I, my view was that the team was side-lined. You know, ‘We’ll just leave them. We won’t give them job descriptions. We’ll let them do their campaigning’, duh duh duh duh… ‘But we can say we’ve got an ethnic minorities team.’ I don’t know how much impact they had. And that was a bit, you know… So, yeah, it was established, but, I don’t…

*A bit tokenistic.*

Yeah, a bit tokenistic. And I remember the director at the time, said… So when I first joined Social Services it wasn’t Deborah Cameron, it aws another guy called Ken Boyce, who’s passed away now, but, erm, he was an interesting guy, so… And I reported directly to him. And I remember going to my first—I think I was quite new, new, but I knew how to, erm, get involved in interview panels because I was doing that in, in housing—and he was appointing a senior, er, one of these heads of service in Social Services, and it was a member appointment, so the chair of the Social Services committee, he was also involved, so I went along, erm, and did my short listening, and I was, you know, really quite, erm, you know, I, I used to follow the rules and procedures—I’m quite a compliant sort of person—and, erm, you know, been doing it for two years in housing and it was fine. So I got involved with this recruitment process, and, erm, I noticed that, you know, Ken Boyce wanted to put someone through, and, on paper, I thought, ‘No. I don’t agree with it.’ Because, you know, whatever. And I said it. I went and said it. And he did not like it at all. And I was quite new into the role with him—I’d not worked with him before—and he banged his, erm, fist on the table, and I just like, ‘What?!’, you know, and he says, he said something like, he referred to me as, ‘the policy advisor’. So, basically, he wanted to push this woman through—it was a woman—and I thought she didn’t meet the criteria, you know? And he didn’t like it at all, erm… And then, erm… So I, you know, I had to sort of manage him. But then I found out lots about him, er, and I also found out that he was having an affair with someone in the organisation—everyone seemed to know about it—and he wanted to put this woman through ‘cos he kind of fancied her.

*Wow.*

Erm, he was, he was, yeah… I kind of got, I got on with him, but it was always quite, erm, you know, boundaried, you know? I would be quite, you know… We didn’t have friendly relationships. But the man liked conflict. So when I had this issue with the ethnic minorities team he loved it. He supported me, but he thrived on the conflict. He loved watching the conflict between, you know, or the disagreement between me and the ethnic minorities team. We were all women. Yeah we were all women; the team was all women. I stood my ground on it because I believed in what I believed, you know, was the right thing to do. Erm, you know, he supported me, and like I said there was a half day’s strike against me, erm, and he supported me, but he loved the conflict. Yeah, so it was, it was difficult with him, and then he was more or less ousted, nothing to do with me. Erm, I think he, he did something. Did he do something? Yeah! So when Deborah Cameron came in, she was, she was one of the heads of service. And I remember when she first came in, me and her had a clash, because, again, it was around some policies and procedures. I was really, I qas quite dogmatic at the time, you know? ‘This needs to happen. That needs to happen properly’. And she clashed with me, I remember, and, you know, that was fine ‘cos I’m not there to be liked, you know? So I had a clash with her. Erm, but there was some allegation that she made of Ken Boyce, and she managed to rally a load of other people to support her and sign, sign a statement against him, which people did—and erm, I wasn’t, I wasn’t party to that, but people did. He then got… He got ousted, basically. Erm, and she got directorship.

*Wow.*

So that’s how she became director. And… So me and her, again, you know, it was always a boundaried relationship, but she was very different to him, and she would, erm, she would be quite friendly towards me. Erm, er, so I kind of, erm… Yeah, I mean, I suppose I was sort of friends with her. She came, she came… When I got married she came to my wedding. When I had my first child she came to the hospital, so we kind of got on quite well. But at the same time, she was also quite a difficult character, erm, and there was not many people in the organisation that got on with her. There were a lot of people who left on really bad terms. I didn’t. I actually didn’t. So, so I learned how to manage her, and, if I’m honest with you, I also, in terms of my allegiance with, you know, the community, actually got a lot for them because I managed her.

*Mmm.*

You know, and… You know, she would listen. Erm, she, she wanted to be liked. She wanted to be liked by the community as well. So she, she kind of accepted my advice more than, more than Ken Boyce did, I suppose.

*Was there a particular reason that people found it hard to work with her?*

Erm, she was mad.

*[Laughs]*

She is mad. Erm, was there a particular reason? So Deborah Cameron, she had the heart, her heart was in the right place. It was all about children. She was, erm, her background was children, child protection. She was excellent in terms of her commitment towards children. But I think she, she got on people’s nerves. She just, it’s just the way she managed them, I think. And she would have… You know, she wasn’t very organised. You know, she was clever but she wasn’t very organised. And then she would do some bizarre things like, she had a dog called Fanny [Laughs] who she used to bring into the office. I suppose that bit was alright—who cares if she brings her dog into the office or not?—but I think it was more the managers that she, that managed the service, just didn’t get on with her. Erm, she was interfering I suppose, but then she’s a manager, she’s a director, she can interfere in anything she likes really. Erm, I suppose I, I, I… yeah, I just got on with her. And I used her, you know, to get what I wanted for the community. That was my job.

*What were the particular needs, erm, of the Asian community for social care?*

Quite big, actually. Erm, there was, erm… There was, there was some organisations around anyway that were already established, but Asian elders XXXX [00:50:19] stood out for me in terms of there was a need. Erm, there was a need for sort of day centre type provision, there was a need for residential provision—or it was creeping up, residential provision; it wasn’t initially. But, because the population, we knew that that was project and was going to be an issue—and food, meals, you know? Erm, and SubCo was quite influential. Erm, there was a character there, I don’t know if Taskin’s mentioned to you, Mr Bhattercherjee, is…? Well I’m pretty sure he’s not alive any more, I think. As I say, his name… I’m sure she would’ve mentioned him. Mr Bhattercherjee his name is.

*What did he do?*

Oh! He was a character! I remember him. He was, er… I mean, you know, his heart’s in the right place, you know, he would just like speak out a lot. And sometimes he’d go off-piste and you don’t know what he’s talking about but… And he can be, could be, you know, potentially annoying, ‘Mr Bhattercherjee again’, you know? But he was an Asian elder, you know, and he was central to that group, that I remember. Erm, but yeah, so there was, er… I was specifically, you know, for the, for Asian elders there was an issue, and that’s how, you know, SubCo became quite, quite important, quite prominent. If there were any campaigns then, you know, SubCo would turn up. [Laughs] You know, rent-a-crowd sometimes, but they would just turn up. I don’t think half of them knew what they were turning up to, but, you know, they would be transported there, and there would be some in their wheelchairs looking quite vulnerable, quite handy, you know? It worked, erm, at the time. Erm, but the centre was lovely. It just became, erm, quite busy and buzzy, and it felt like, erm, you know the Asian elders were having a really nice time, actually. You know, er, nice place to socialise. And then the meals aspect came in, which was a bit of a… I remember it was a bit of a… You know, yeah, we got a result. You know, now, you know, they can eat the feed they like as well. It was really nice to see. And I remember when I used to go and visit, we used to go and have a bit to eat as well, you know? It was lovely, absolutely lovely. I think I remember, was there a kitchen there as well? Taskin will know. And I think the cooking was done there as well at one point. I can’t remember. And then that service, I think it developed into a meals on wheels provision as well, which was needed. And then, I think for me, when the Chinese elders bit got integrated into SubCo that was the bit that was, you know, I’ve still got a picture in my head. There were, there were… I think it was based on certain days. Not to say that you wouldn’t have Asian elders and Chinese elders seen in the same room, but I have a feeling, might’ve been to do with the kitchens, but you would have certain days when there would be Chinese meals, and Chinese elders would be there. And that was lovely. I think that was, that was the bit that I thought, ‘Yeah, this is, this is really nice. Beautiful.’ You know, watching people enjoy eating their own food. Having the freedom to do that.

*Yeah. Yeah, I mean it’s obviously very important for people, especially as they get older…*

Yeah.

*… to have…*

Yeah. Yeah.

*So, when did you, sort of, first come into contact with SubCo.*

It was when I was in Newham. I can’t remember the year but I would’ve, I would’ve… I can’t remember when it was established now, do you? Can’t remember.

*Twenty-five years ago.*

So twenty-five years ago. So what year would that be? Erm, twenty-five years?

*1993?Erm, yeah, ’93?*

’93. So I would’ve been in Social Services then. So, yeah, so I would’ve been part of the grant funding that they got.

*Mmm.*

I can’t, if I’m honest, I can’t remember the detail, but it would’ve, they would’ve gone through the same process. It would’ve had to have a management committee. I know Ramesh Verma who you’ve probably, you’ve probably seen, haven’t you?

*Yeah.*

She was really, really active in… She’s a buzzy, she still is, but she was, you know, a buzzy sort of character. She was involved in lots and lots of things, lots of organisations. Erm, and she was really, erm… So you might have… Mr Bhattercherjee who’s an elder but, you know, you couldn’t control what would come out of his mouth and whether it would be, you know, alright to say, or constructive. And then you’d have Ramesh Verma, who was highly respected, and, but would say it in a way that, you know, would be quite constructive in possibly language that local authority would understand, but also in a campaigning way, sort of demanding way. So, I think what happened in Newham was, and it was needed, was, you know, you, you want the voluntary sector to be banging on your door, you know, saying, ‘I want this; I want that’, you know? And that’s what began to happen. And I encouraged that actually. That was great.

*Mmm.*

‘Cos that helped me. ‘Cos if they campaigned and… Not campaigned as in pickets, when it came to Asian elders or, you know, ethnic minority organisations in social care, but, you know, demanding, writing in, you know, to Deborah Cameron, and copying me in. You know, I would say to them, ‘Copy me in as well’, you know? Er, In fact, you know I would encourage. Deborah, Deborah would probably kill me now, but I played the role of, ‘Yeah! Do it! Write in. This is what you should say’! [Laughs]

*[Laughs]*

You know? And Deborah would say pass it on to me… [Laughs]

*[Laughs]*

… to deal with! I thought, ‘Yeah alright Deborah, alight. I think we should do this.’ So, yeah, played the game.

*But I mean I guess without that sort of community involvement you don’t really know what the needs are, and…*

No.

*… how they want them to be met.*

Absolutely. So in the local authority we’d do all the, erm, you know, the commissioning and, er, look at the population, and, and do basic kind of needs analysis. So you would know, yeah, you’ve got an Asian elders population, you know? A growing population etc. But unless you actually involved in the community you won’t know what, how they want it. So, yeah, you know, residential homes are, you know, established, you know, environments, but the way they’re constructed might not be appropriate for Asian elders. So getting involved in that sort of design, you know, what that would look like, is really important...

*Mmm.*

… you know, for the community. You know, I have to say, I don’t think, you know, the community were always happy, you know, but, you know I think, I think we got some results. And I think since things have got worse haven’t they? Because of the funding situation and, erm… There was, er, a dependency on the council, ‘cos, ‘cos it was all grant based, so, you know, er, you know, communities would say, ‘The need hasn’t changed so why has my… Why would you’, say, ‘withdraw the funding? Or even reduce the funding, actually: I want more!’ You know, erm, and then there was a bit of a sea change where people had to look elsewhere, you know? Which is a good thing, you know: look at other types of funding. Don’t just rely on what you get from the council.

*Mmm.*

Because budgets... I don’t think it was that bad at the time, but since then they’ve shrunk considerably. So, you know, lots of places, I’m still involved in another organisation in Newham, and I’ve been involved since 1989, so, again, when I was in Newham… it used to be called Newham Asian Women’s Project, it’s now called London Black Women’s Organisation, so I’m still on the management committee of that, so I’ve still got Newham sort of connection.

*Were you… So was it founded in 1989, or did you join?*

I was involved in, in, in when it was, when it was established, erm… I… And I’ve been on the committee more than I’ve been off since. You know, there was a period when I came off, then I went back on. Erm, but that organisation’s been around that long as well. Yeah, ’80-, about ’88, ’89.

*Yeah. Would you mind telling me a bit more about that organisation: how it was started up and what you did?*

Yeah. How what?

*How it started up and what sort of work you did.*

Okay, erm, so, erm, Newham Asian Women’s Project, erm, mainly, er, at the time, er, for a long time it was focussed on Asian women, erm, escaping domestic abuse. Erm, and, erm, there was, er, at the time there was just one kind of refuge, er, in a secret location in Newham. And, erm, there was an advice centre that started to develop, so it was refuge accommodation for a small number of people, and providing advice. It was an organisation that, erm, the councillors didn’t like because, er, some of the councillors… I remember, one time, one of the councillor’s wives came into the service.

*Wow!*

Because he’d hid her. He’d beat her up. Erm, and so it was quite difficult for the councillors to, erm, have that organisation in Newham. Erm, some old fashioned gits who thought, you know, you know, we’re doing the wrong thing. So it was probably quite difficult, erm, you know, start up for the organisation. But, you know, it got funding, erm, and it was there. Erm, and then it slowly began to expand, so, er, as well as a refuge it had kind of a, a second stage, erm, hostel type accommodation. So after refuge you move into a second stage refuge before you, you know, went out and got your own council place, or your own place. Erm, and then, over time, erm, the advice element, erm, expanded. Erm, it attracted somewhat, some funding from, from health as well as, you know the health authority at the time in Newham as well as, as well as the council, and started to do some work with, er, young girls. So it had a young girls, sort of, element to it. And, and then, erm, again, you know, sort of probably a bit more recently it expanded into Haringey actually. So it was still called Newham Asian Women’s Project, but there was, erm, the organisation that was in Haringey was kinda falling apart, and they asked Newham whether we wanted to engage, so we did. So we had, had, erm, a refuge over there in Haringey. Erm, and, erm, and then more recently, only in the last year or so, erm, we changed our name, sort of a little bit reluctantly, but there was lots of pressure, erm, to move away from just, er, being, you know, an organisation for Asian women, erm, so it’s now called London Black Women’s Organisation. Erm…

*What, sort of… Erm, where did the pressure come from to…?*

Pressure, pressure was from funders. And, and I think sea change nationally as well. It, it wasn’t just, it wasn’t just a Newham thing, it was a national thing. So we have, we’ve done that, and that’s, that’s fine, and we don’t rely on just funding from, from Newham. Erm, but it does a lot of good work around, you know, er, abuse, domestic abuse. I think relationships with some of the, erm… It was mainly with the male, the male councillors that wasn’t good. Er, but I think people just got used to it, ‘cos we didn’t go, we stayed and carried on. You know, erm, and, erm… Yeah, it’s great. It’s a great organisation, you know, to be involved in.

*Mmm.*

And I’ve stayed involved, so that’s quite nice.

*Was there ever, erm, pressure on the organisation from men in the Asian community?*

From the Asian community?

*Yeah.*

Well, from the councillors mainly. I don’t think… I think we had a fairly good relationship with all the groups, the voluntary groups, actually, but it was mainly Asian councillors. And you know, they’re a bit of a force, you know? Especially around funding, you know? You rely on funding. Erm, and they didn’t like the challenge. You know, if there was any challenge they didn’t like it.

**[INTERVIEW REDACTED]**

But, no, Newham, er, London Black Women’s Organisation is there, and, er, it’s solid.

*Yeah.*

Solid.

*Yeah. Erm, what was it like working with Taskin in the council? Did she get on well?*

So she, as I said, she worked, when she worked in the council the only job, I think the only job she had in the council was with me, actually, I’m pretty sure. Yeah,. She was great. She was absolutely great. Erm, so she was, erm, she was a race equality officer for, I think it was for Stratford or Forest Gate. One of those, one of those. I can’t remember. And she was absolutely great to work with, you know? Really , really good. What else can I say about her? Yeah, she knew what she was doing, you know? Yeah. I enjoyed working with… I, but, you know, like I said, Anna Wan was another one. I think I, I, Satnam Singh was difficult, erm, I didn’t enjoy working with him, and we had, erm, another guy, erm—what was his name?—who, he was just, he was redeployed. I took him on because he was redeployed elsewhere. But, actually, he, he, er, had mental health issues, erm, and that exploded at one point and he, er… He wasn’t very nice to me, but he wasn’t nice to anyone. So he would go to the papers and make complaints about the councillors, and about the leader, erm, and he ended up in tribunal and then got very ill, erm, called the judge Monica Lewinsky because she had long hair. Erm, anyway, he, he… He was a bit… But all my, all my team, the race equality officers, were brilliant. Brilliant.

*Erm, you mentioned about when, er, Chinese elders used to come to SubCo. Do you know…*

Yeah. Chinese elders, yeah.

*… do you know when that sort of* *stopped happening?*

I don’t actually. I don’t. I don’t know whether it was… I think it was after I left. So I left in, erm… I think I left in 2000, I think. Or ’99. 2000. So I don’t know. I think it was still, still going on. SubCo was thriving, erm, Taskin was, I think… I think she was chief executive, and I, and then I came across her somewhere, she’d decided to do a social work qualification, so I think… I can’t remember if I bumped into her in Camden when I was doing consulting, but she never went into social work. She never went to become a social worker. She did the qualification as far as I know, and then she went back to, you know, in SubCo. Erm, as far as I know, the Chinese… I don’t know if they’re still doing it, but Chinese elders were, I think it was still going on.

*Mmm.*

Yeah.

*Erm, do you have any particular memories of visiting the centre, or any sort of particular work that SubCo did that stands out?*

Yeah, I was there all the time! Well, not all the time, but, yeah, I would visit all the, quite frequently. Erm, you know, like I said, if we went there, and we would have a bite to eat, erm, you know, we would, I would chat to people. Erm, I mean I, in the, in my team there was all, there was always links, you now? People had portfolios around which areas of grant funding they were kind of managing if you like. Which ones they would do the conrtact managing for, you know? So, yeah, they used to visit on a regular basis, but, erm, I used to visit, you know, SubCo. And that’s, you know… It was lovely walking in, seeing people eating, and just milling around, chatting to people, having a nice time. Erm, and then, if they had kind of events and stuff they would, they would invite me, erm, you know, to come along. Ramesh was also really good at that. She would say, ‘Well, we’re having this’, you know, ‘will you come along?’

*What sort of events would they have?*

You know, AGMs, erm, or just any kind of religious or cultural, erm, type events. They would have quite a lot of those in Newham. Erm, you know, I think they probably cut down a lot because of funding for those sorts of things, but they used to do those and, erm, er, you know, take the Asian elders out on trips. But if there were events they would always bring them in to the centre, you know, and they would be central to it.

*Mmm.*

Yeah, all kinds of events would happen. You know, there’d be a leaflet about it, you know, somewhere. Erm, saying, ‘This is happening’, whatever.

*Where there any sort of characters involved with SubCo, or service users that XXXX [01:11:04]?*

There was another guy, he was, no, he was actually a councillor, but I can’t remember his name, but he was closely affiliated to SubCo. I remember him being quite vocal in, in a good way. But I think it’s Mr Bhattercherjee who kind of stood out a lot. Erm… I don’t… I can’t remember. I can’t remember names.

*Mmm.*

You know, you’d see the usual kind of same-old, same-old people there, but I can’t remember their names.

*Erm, I’ve sort of kind of finished asking all the questions I had in my mind. Is there anything else you’d like to say, or, sort of…?*

Er, no, not really, actually. But, er, yeah, it’s a lot that came back to me while I was talking actually. It was quite nice.

*Yeah. Good.*

Yeah, it was really nice memories of Newham, actually. Really nice memories. Yeah.

*Excellent. Well, thank you very much for your time.*

No, no, no, it’s okay.

**The End**

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**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Palvinder Khudail**

**Project: Growing Old Gracefully**

**Date of interview: 28.04.18**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Common room of Palvinder’s apartment block, Shoreditch**

**Name of interviewer: Francis Ball**

**Length of interview: 1hr 12mins 15secs**

**Transcribed by: Jo Law and Francis Ball**

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