



Employment Needs of Octavia Housing and Care Tenants



August 2006

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1. Executive summary

Octavia Housing and Care owns and manages premises for nearly 4,000 tenants in the West London areas providing a mixed service of general and specialist needs housing.

Octavia has developed a strong community development programme and is working with a group of partners including some of its suppliers, a local college and a training provider to implement a rent cycle employment project. The project is intended to use the purchasing power generated by rental income to open up opportunities for training and employment.

This research commissioned to provide more information about tenants seeks to:

- Identify unemployed tenants interested in assistance in gaining jobs
- Establish the type of assistance required to help them in the job market
- Find out about agencies that have assisted in the past
- Establish what are perceived to be barriers to unemployment
- Develop a profile of tenants who would benefit from the programme

The research has been commissioned against a backdrop of government agenda of sustainable communities. Registered Social Landlords are encouraged to buy into this agenda where tackling poverty is crucial, and researching employment needs and employment assistance are seen as useful mechanisms for assisting social housing tenants access the job market.

Several registered social landlords have tried various schemes sustainable communities' schemes. These schemes range from access to credit and finance, through to capacity building and training in soft skills. Most of these schemes have been evaluated to identify objective and subjective reasons why people are unemployed.

One research project identified four main issues, namely, personal characteristics, attitudes of the unemployed, external factors and employers' attitudes and practices. Another research project revealed that there are high risk groups of people who are likely to be unemployed and these include: people with disabilities, young people especially those that are Black, lone parents, ethnic minority people, older people and persons living in deprived neighbourhoods. The research concluded that the more the combination of these factors, the more likely a person is to be unemployed.

This research into the employment needs of Octavia Housing and Care tenants sought to elicit information on the personal details, education and skills, the employment status of tenants, their knowledge of local regeneration initiatives, their perceptions of assistance required they require to gain jobs, and their efforts in and expectations in finding employment.

The field work for the project was carried out between February and June 2006. Over 3,000 questionnaires were sent out to tenants in February 2006. This was followed up by telephone interviews between March and April and focus groups organised in June. A total of 163 people were interviewed as part of the survey and findings are presented in this report.

The profile of Octavia tenants as presented by the survey indicate that :

- A majority lived in the West London postcodes of W11, W9 and NW10
- The typical tenant had been with Octavia for between 6 and 21 years, with tenants who had shorter tenures being more likely to be unemployed
- Tenants spanned all age bands though there were a higher proportion between the ages of 36 and 55. Those in the age band 36 – 45 were most at risk of unemployment
- The female tenants outnumbered male tenants by two to one and were more likely to be unemployed
- Three out of four tenants had children; over 65% of them had fewer than 3 children who tended to be older.
- Over three quarters of respondents lived with other adults in the household
- Tenants come from very diverse ethnic backgrounds; half of them are from visible minorities groups, spread over different continents and spoke a total of 19 languages amongst them. Ethnic minority tenants were more likely to be unemployed, though very few saw language as a barrier to employment.
- One third of tenants had a disability. People with disability are considered to be one of the groups of people who are most at risk of unemployment.
- Roughly 73% of all tenants receive benefits. The most popular benefit was Income Support followed by Incapacity Benefits, Job Seekers Allowance and pensions.
- A larger number of tenants were educated to GCSE level, though there were tenants with NVQs, diploma and degrees. The survey revealed that tenants with NVQs and degrees were less likely to be unemployed.
- One in five of the tenants had studied overseas though this did not seem to have a negative impact on their employment prospects. Very few tenants were still studying,
- One third of tenants were in employment and in one third of households there was another adult in employment. However very few of tenants worked in managerial type jobs; most were employed in administrative and semi-skilled jobs.
- For the 40% of tenants who said they were unemployed, there was a larger number who were unemployed because of a disability though some mentioned lack of skills; very few said poor pay was the cause of their unemployment. Some tenants said that they could not find a job.
- When the tenants were given an expanded list of reasons for being unemployed, extended, a larger number said that they were unemployed because of lack of work experience. Other reasons included lack of skills and poor education and discrimination.

The work aspirations of tenants were not unrealistic given their general skills levels.

- Few tenants wanted to work in managerial positions, many more wanted to be skilled technicians, but a large number wanted trainee positions in order to gain some experience before entering into permanent employment.

- Tenants generally aspired to modest salaries, none aspired to earning over £25,000 and a larger number said that they were content with basic minimum salaries at entry scale jobs.

The preferred sector for work by tenants is the community and voluntary sector. The hotel and catering sector, the retail sector and public administration followed the community and voluntary sector in order of preference. Surprisingly, few tenants chose the construction and building trades despite the fact that this sector tends to provide a lot of job opportunities in regeneration areas

Tenants were actively engaged in a variety of job search efforts.

- One third of tenants have been actively looking for work in the past 12 months.
- Tenants had generally looked for jobs in the local areas and very few had ventured further in search for jobs.
- One third said they had been assisted by no one.
- Tenants were less likely to seek the services of careers advisers; two thirds of tenants would not seek their assistance.
- One in five named an agency from which they had received support in their search for jobs.
- The job centre was by far the most effective point of contact and tenants felt that those job centres that made an effort to offer job brokerage services were better equipped to assist unemployed persons. One in four had contacted the Job Centre Plus..
- Just over half the tenants have not attended training programmes whilst looking for employment.
- However three quarters of respondents said they are more likely to attend a training programme if it would lead to a job.

Despite the large number of regeneration schemes being implemented in several of the local areas in which Octavia Housing and Care tenants live, tenants knowledge of regeneration projects and their effects was very patchy.

Very few had heard of some of their local regeneration schemes and of the four large schemes of Wembley, Paddington Basin, Park Royal and White City, Wembley Stadium turned out to be the most recognisable amongst tenants.

Tenants could not attest to the benefits of these schemes, very few had been approached to be assisted with a job, very few had approached any of these agencies for a job and fewer still had been assisted by any of these schemes with regard to gaining access to a job.

Most tenants however said that they would be interested in the rent cycle employment project.

Tenants would like to be assisted with a package of methods that included tracking their employment status, providing them with job feeds and contacts, assisting with job training in partnership with a training organisation or employer and assisting them with work placements even if that meant a job with Octavia itself or with one of its partners.

Octavia should continue to audit the skills of its tenants, set up a scheme of employment assistance, publicise the scheme and undertake further investigation into needs of the young unemployed and what needs to be done to bring people with disabilities who are capable of working.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Octavia Housing and Care is a Housing Association that owns and manages nearly 4,000 properties that are concentrated in the core boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Brent. Their other properties are in Hounslow, Basildon, Thurrock, Southampton, Camden and Southwark.

Octavia provides a mixed service of general needs housing as well as specialist housing services including care and support for older and vulnerable people. The organisation is also a specialist provider of temporary accommodation to Kensington and Chelsea.

Octavia considers that the ideas of Octavia Hill, a well known housing campaigner after whom the housing association is named, is as relevant now as it was when she first propagated these then novel, ideas in the 19th century. As much as possible Octavia seeks to incorporate those principles in its approach to the management of its stock.

One of the important tenets of her philosophy is the suggestion that tenants must pay their rents on a timely basis. The employment of tenants was of great interest to her and in her time she created some simple schemes for young tenants. It was also important to her that tenants are involved in developments to their property, a principle that plagues many regeneration projects today.

Following on from some of these principles, Octavia has developed a very strong community development programme in its approach to housing management. It has operated several projects in the past to assist tenants gain employment and is currently involved in a major one – the Rent Cycle Employment Project.

The aim of the Rent Cycle Employment Project is to use the purchasing power generated by the rental income to benefit tenants by opening up opportunities for training and employment.

It operates by bringing together corporate partners who will provide work experience placements in a range of different disciplines for unemployed tenants. The partners, College of North West London, Kensington and Chelsea College, LEAP and Durkan Group provide comprehensive work preparation and continuous personal support during the project.

This research has been commissioned by Octavia to provide the organisation with more information about the employment needs of its tenants and to determine whether there exists a core group of tenants who will benefit from the RCEP..

Specifically the research seeks further information that will help:

- identify tenants who are unemployed and who would be interested in receiving assistance from Octavia and its partners in gaining employment
- establish the kind of assistance these tenants think would be most beneficial to them in gaining access the job market
- find out which agencies they are aware of or have used in their search for employment
- establish what they consider to be barriers to employment
- develop a profile of those tenants who would benefit most from the Rent Cycle Employment Project so that the project can be focused on helping that group of people.

1.2 Employment needs of tenants

The government's housing vision is set out in the document **Sustainable Communities: building for the future** launched by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2003. The document provided for a plethora of plans, guidance and funding streams to back up this vision.

the document deals with the main issues of housing shortage and the provision of a well integrated mix of decent affordable homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. The government goes on to stress the need for the creation of a diverse, vibrant and creative culture that would encourage pride in the community and cohesion within it and that would have the right links with the wider regional, national and international communities.

One of the important planks of the vision is for the provision of good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, health care and community facilities especially for leisure. The ultimate result of such a vision, if embraced by registered social landlords, would be flourishing local economies that would provide jobs and generate wealth.

In January 2005 another document **Sustainable Communities: Homes for all** was published with emphasis on making all social housing decent by 2010. This document provides for a five year plan for tackling issues around social deprivation and poverty.

The Housing Corporation has provided guidance to registered social landlords who want to work towards the targets set by government and has published a template for organisations who wish to implement the strategy for tackling poverty. This is published as part of their Innovation and Good Practice guidelines.

In the document **Registered Social Landlords and tackling poverty** under its **bIGPicture** title, the Housing Corporation identifies the four main issues as:

- Reducing tenants costs
- Operating as information providers and gateway organisations
- Developing anti poverty strategies and
- Regenerating communities and promoting sustainability

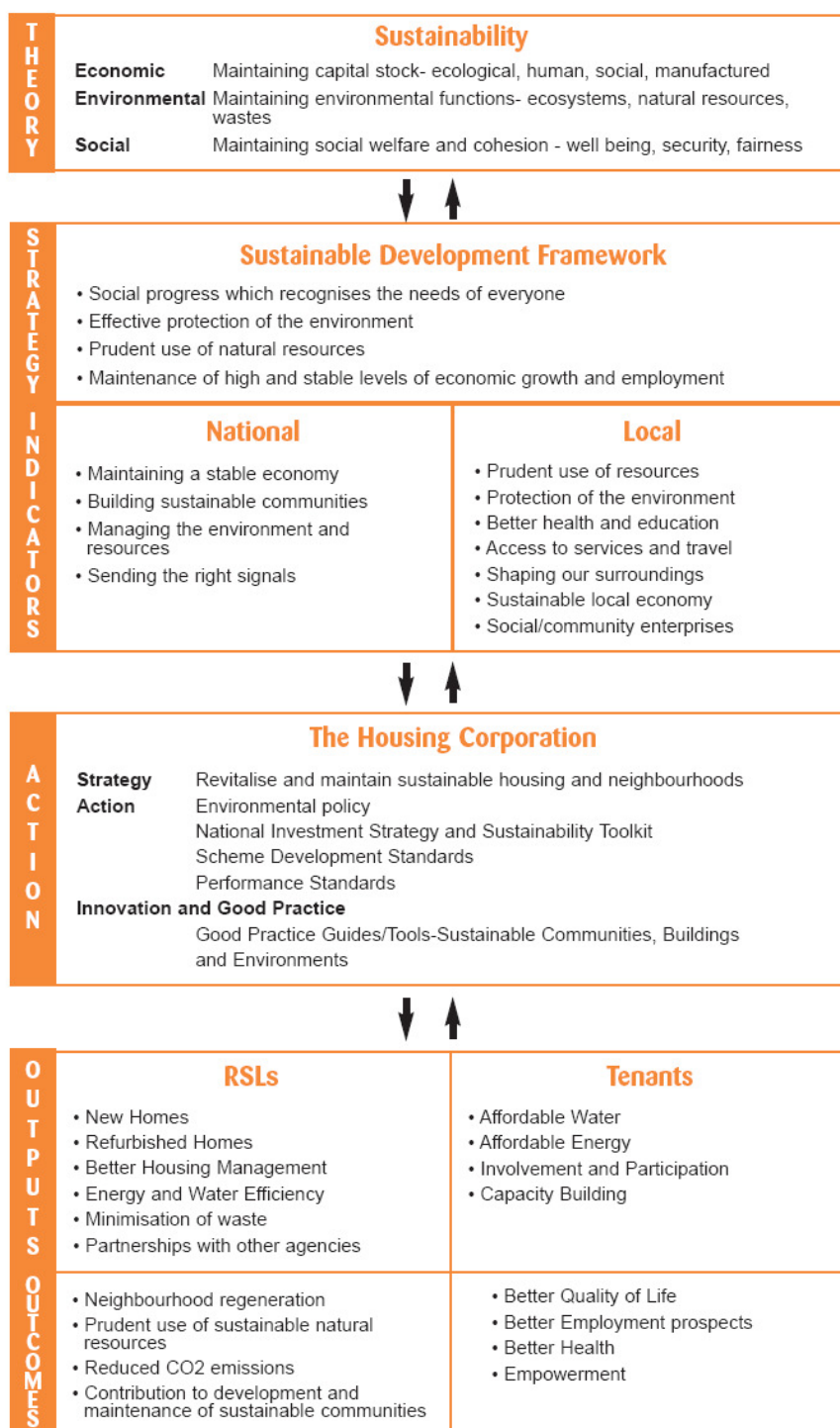
The document advocates the linking of building and refurbishment works to the provision of construction jobs and training for tenants and local people as well as the promotion of and adoption of intermediate labour market strategies.

In order for registered Social Landlords to do this well, they must be engaged in regeneration projects in their local areas and help leverage the assistance from these partnerships for their tenants.

The government's encouragement for registered social landlords to get involved in regeneration projects is not new. Housing associations have taken on the mantle of increasingly being the preferred agencies for the management of housing and as more borough council housing stock has been transferred to housing associations, they are being asked by the government to play a more active role. In its publication, **A new commitment to Neighbourhood renewal: national strategy and action plan**, the government advocates that Housing Associations must take up their places on Local Strategic Partnerships that are formed to drive regeneration.

Sustainability and Social Housing Theory into Practice - the biGPicture

Fig 1 (see page 3)



Source: Social housing and sustainability September 2000 housing Corporation

In **Social Housing and Sustainability**, the Housing Corporation advocates better employment prospects for tenants as one of the benefits of involvement in regeneration projects by the housing associations.

Several other regeneration projects that have been initiated and implemented by housing associations are reviewed in the document. These include:

- Access to credit and capital
- Community enterprise
- Local business development
- Responsible business practices
- Capacity building and training

In London, for instance, it has been observed that whilst the major issues relate to the raising of educational standards and an improvement of the skills levels of tenants, it has become more and more crucial that these local regeneration partnerships widen their focus of increasing sustainability to the development and implementation of employment schemes.

Housing associations embarking on employment projects must firstly assess the suitability of these projects for their tenants and therefore there is a crucial need to develop a robust baseline from which these projects will follow. Not only will the research be useful in providing guidance on how to proceed but it will afford a proper evaluation and monitoring of the project.

Housing initiatives have been around for some time now; as far back as 1995, the Rowntree Foundation commissioned ***Going the extra mile: Implementing 'Housing Plus' on five London housing association estates***, by Richard Kemp and Geoff Fordham. The study examined 'Housing Plus' or Quality of Life projects on five London housing estates that had a high rate of people in high risk groups - single person households, lone parents, child densities, and ethnic minority population. This study identified the crucial participation of tenant in the process of implementation of projects around several themes that include training for employment for tenants.

A study by Hausner & Associates **Economic Revitalisation of the inner cities: the Urban Programme and ethnic minorities. Victor Hausner and Associates, Inner City Research programme 1993, London HMSO** cites the fact that impediments to employment are based on several factors including objective and subjective factors. It concluded that though Black and ethnic minority people had to change their attitude to work a corresponding change by employers was also necessary.

Though this report is dated, having been written in 1993, it provides a useful matrix that is still relevant for looking at assistance to communities and tenants in regeneration projects.

However there were issues outside the control of both the potential employees and the employers and any positive action initiatives have to deal with the issue of how to get these people into recruitment networks.

The identified factors are:

Personal Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of skills in demand • Poor educational qualifications including numeracy and literacy • Lack of work experience 	External factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of child care facilities • Housing tenure restricting mobility • Poor transport • Exclusion from informal recruitment networks • discrimination
Attitudes of the Unemployed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctance to travel • Reluctance to train • Alienation and apathy 	Employers attitudes and practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotyping of certain groups, racist discrimination • Poor pay and conditions • Inaccessible location • Overestimates of skill entry thresholds

Source: Hausner and Associates 1993

Research in Bexley by Equinox Consulting, **Barriers to employment and training amongst young black people 1998**, also identified some of these problems. Although some of the young black people had relatively higher qualifications, their expectations at the type of jobs they wanted to do were seen as unrealistic because they lacked work experience and the soft skills that would get them into employment,.

Other studies have identified high risk employment groups so that targeted and specialist initiatives can be developed to counteract their particular disadvantage.

Some initiatives isolate the different high risks groups that are most likely to suffer disadvantage in the labour market and develop programmes that will deal with their particular disadvantage. This has led to separate programmes for people with disabilities, for lone parents, for ethnic minority people, for younger people and for older people.

Richard Berthoud, *Multiple disadvantage in employment: a quantitative analysis*, Work and Opportunity Series No 31, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003), ISBN: 1 84263 0520, has identified 7 factors that place people in high risk employment groups and asserted that a larger number of unemployed persons are faced with multiple disadvantage. These groups included:

1. young people
2. men and women without partners especially lone parents
3. disabled people
4. persons with low qualifications and skills
5. people in their 50s
6. people living in areas of low labour demand
7. persons from certain ethnic minority groups

Berthoud's conclusions were **that "Only 4 per cent of individuals with none of these disadvantages are non-employed. The more disadvantages, the greater the risk: more than 90 per cent of people with all six disadvantages are non-employed."**

All these studies cited above and the initiatives that flow from them confirm that intermediate labour market, and in some cases pre-labour market initiatives that address the points of disadvantage, are necessary to enable unemployed people to overcome the barriers to employment whether perceived or real.

Within the context of tenants of Octavia Housing and Care, previous research shows that the profile of tenants indicate a large number who are likely to fall within one of more of the identified high risk groups. It is against this backdrop of the government's vision for sustainable communities, various regenerations initiatives and the activities of other registered social landlords who have implemented some of these intermediate labour market strategies that this assignment into the employment needs of Octavia residents has been carried out.

1.3 Methodology

The research started in November 2005 with discussions with Octavia on the best way of capturing information about their tenants. A previous survey of the tenants (Octavia Housing Draft Survey Report October 2005) had revealed that “34% of tenants received an income from employment and 71% of households received their income in full or part from state benefits.” These figures were used as an indicator to determine the sample of Octavia tenants to be interviewed that would be representative. It was decided that 286 tenants would be interviewed to provide us with 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5%.

In the event this target number was not achieved and a total of 149 tenants were interviewed in the main survey. This number of tenants interviewed is still statistically accurate though with a higher confidence interval of 7.8% at a confidence level of 95%. This means, for example, that if 34% of tenants answered ‘Yes’ to a question, we can say that there are 95 chances out of 100 that the correct figure for all tenants will be between 26.2% and 41.8%.

The questionnaire that was finally approved for the interviews collected information on

- Personal details
- Education and skills
- Perceptions and assistance required
- Knowledge of local area regeneration developments and assistance
- Employment status
- Job expectations and job search efforts

The survey was undertaken in three main phases:

Phase One was a postal survey to all tenants – a total of around 3,000 questionnaire were dispatched in February 2006 to all tenants. An incentive was provided to ensure that the response rate was sufficiently high to make the research statistically representative.

Despite the incentive of five gift vouchers worth £25 each the response rate was fairly low – 44 persons responded to the questionnaire by the target date of 1st March 2006, using the reply-paid envelope supplied.

Phase Two involved telephone interviews. This was implemented between April and May when 125 more people were interviewed by five surveyors.

This phase presented some difficulty because there were a large number of telephone calls made to people who were retired and who did not want to take part in the survey.

Phase Three of the research involved two focus groups with tenants to provide more information and probe deeper some of the issues to which the research sought answers. 14 people attended the focus groups that were held in June 2006

The number of tenants contacted and interviewed is presented in the table below.

TABLE 1 SURVEY RESPONSE SCHEDULE

Method of interviews	Numbers contacted	responses
Postal questionnaires	3000	44
Telephone interviews	250	125
Focus groups	50	14
Total interviewed		163

2 Findings

The findings of the survey are reported in this section.

2.1 Profile of tenants

2.1.1 Post code profile

In the discussions prior to the research, it was established that Octavia tenants were based around 4 main cluster areas, these were:

TABLE 2 GEOGRAPHICAL CLUSTER AREAS OF OCTAVIA TENANTS

Area	Number of tenants
North Kensington	1,000
Harrow Road	900
Church Street	400
Brent	200
Total	2,500

The responses from the survey confirmed this profile of the distribution of tenants. About 50% of respondents of the survey were from the Notting Hill, Maida Vale and Willesden postcodes of W11, W9 and NW10.

The other responses were spread over the different areas where Octavia manages properties. Though the survey was intended to concentrate on the four areas of North Kensington, Harrow Road, Church Street and Brent, there were some responses from South London and Wickford.

The table below shows a breakdown of respondents from different areas arranged by post codes.

TABLE 3 CLUSTER OF TENANTS AROUND POSTCODE AREA

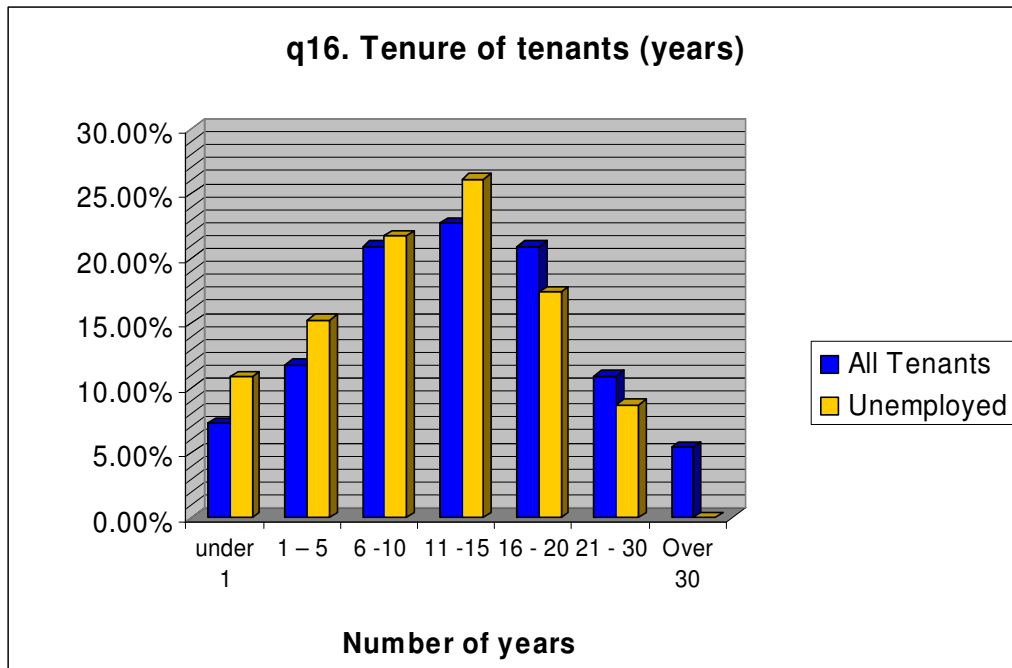
q3 postcode	Area	All Tenants	%	Unemployed	%
W11 ***	Notting hill	36	24.00%	12	21.82%
W9 ***	Maida vale	23	15.33%	11	20.00%
NW10 ***	Willesden	17	11.33%	8	14.55%
SW6 ***	Fulham	12	8.00%	5	9.09%
W1H ***	Marylebone	10	6.67%	1	1.82%
NW8 ***	St Johns Wood	9	6.00%	3	5.45%
NW6 ***	Kilburn	7	4.67%	4	7.27%
W10 ***	North Kensington	6	4.00%	2	3.64%
NW2 ***	Cricklewood	4	2.67%	1	1.82%
NW9 ***	The Hyde	3	2.00%	2	3.64%
W14 ***	West Kensington	3	2.00%	3	5.45%
SE1 ***	The Borough	3	2.00%	0	0.00%
HA0 ***	Wembley	2	1.33%	1	1.82%
NW1 ***	Marylebone	2	1.33%	1	1.82%
NW3 ***	Hampstead	1	0.67%	0	0.00%
W1D ***	Soho	1	0.67%	0	0.00%
SS12 ***	Wickford	1	0.67%	1	1.82%
Did not answer		9	6.67%	0	0.00%
Total		149	100.00%	55	100.00%

2.1.2 Length of tenancy

One in five tenants had been with Octavia for less than 5 years and 7.27% had been tenants for less than one year. We established that about 64% of tenants had been with Octavia between 6 years and 20 years and roughly more than half of the tenants had been residents for more than 10 years.

This showed that tenants had stable tenure with Octavia, the median length of tenancy was within the 11- 15 year band; accounting for 22.73% of tenants. None of the tenants who had been with Octavia for more than 30 years were unemployed.

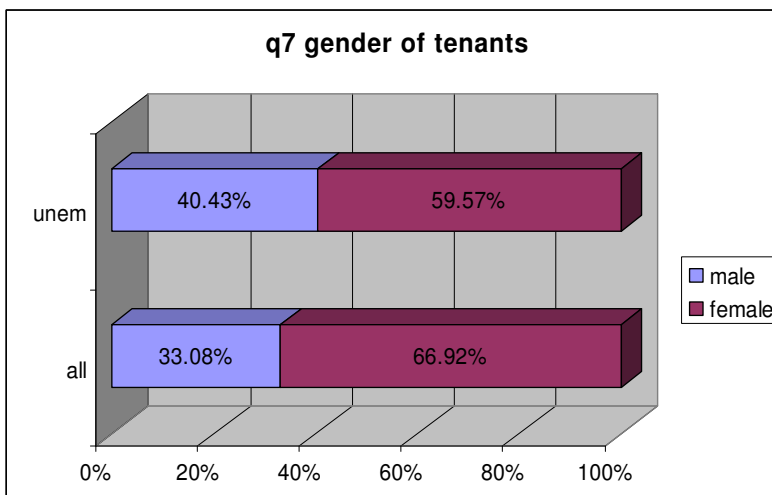
FIGURE 1. TENURE OF TENANTS IN YEARS



2.1.3 Gender

Two thirds of the tenants who responded to the survey were women. We did not ascertain whether they were the principal tenant, neither did we ascertain, in the questionnaire, their marital status. The gender profile for the unemployed was broadly in line with the profile for all respondents. This showed that 60% of unemployed respondents being women.

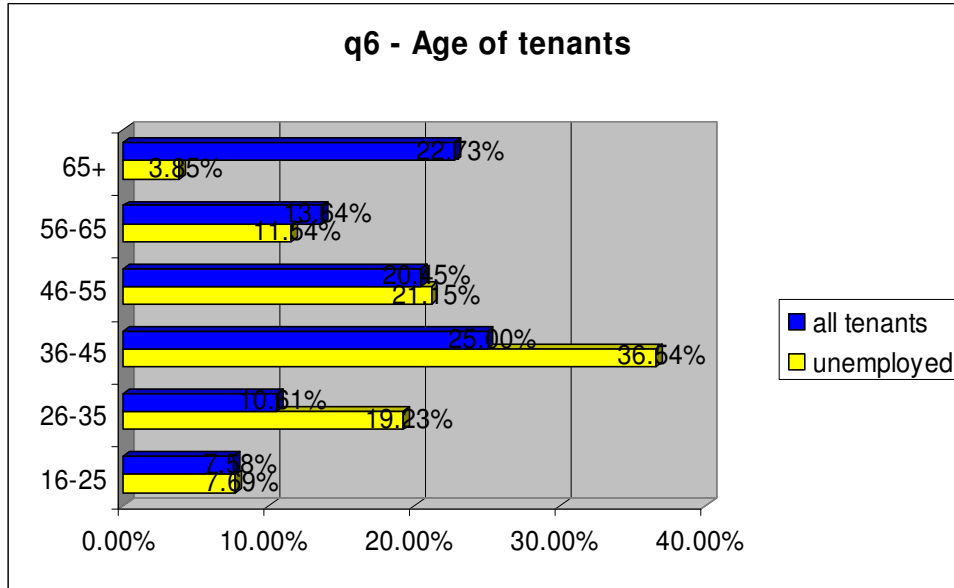
FIGURE 2. GENDER OF TENANTS



2.1.4 Age

Though 12% of tenants surveyed did not provide us with their ages, the age profile of respondents to the questionnaire showed that one in five of the residents were above the age of retirement.

FIGURE 3. AGE PROFILE OF TENANTS



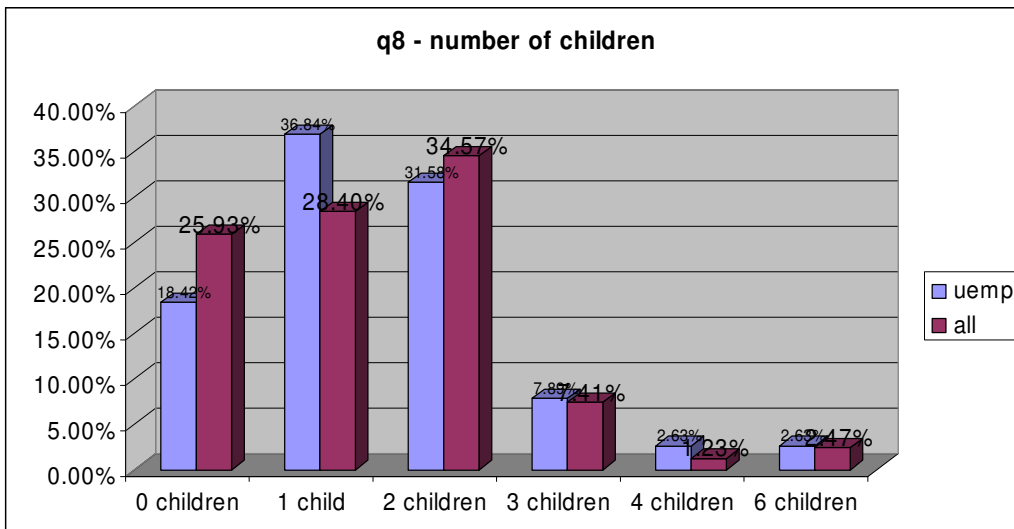
The age distribution of tenants was fairly mixed but were nearly half of the tenants, 45.45% were between the ages of 36 and 55 years of age. Only 7.58% of respondents were below 25 years of age.

The age profile corresponds with an earlier survey that found that 4% of tenants were less than 24 years of age, 25% were above 65 years and 24% between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age.

2.1.5 Number of children and their ages

One in four tenants did not have any children. The total number of children between the 68 tenants who responded that they had children was 113 giving the average number of children per tenant at 1.66.

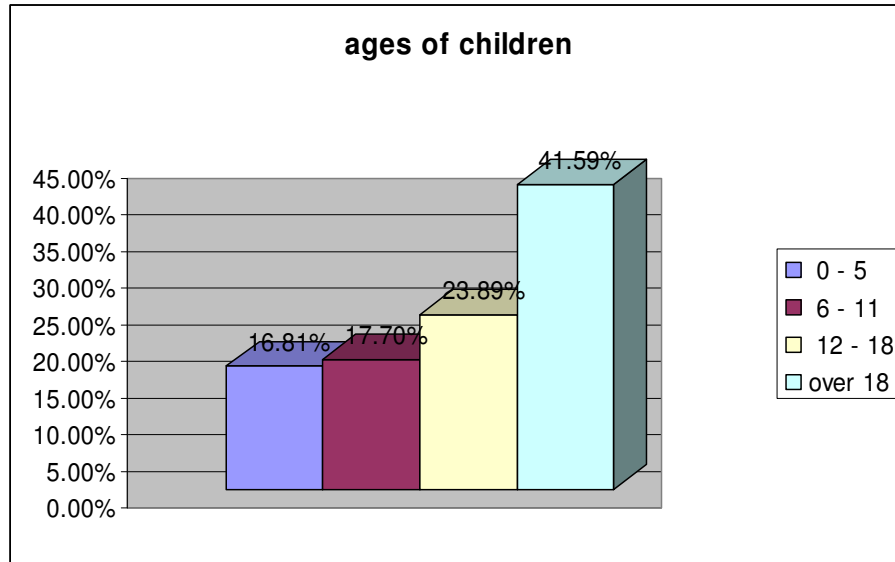
FIGURE 4. NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER TENANT



Two of the tenants said that they had six children. We did not establish whether the children lived in the households though we expected this to be the case with the younger children.

The tenants tended to have older children; this probably is a reflection of the maturing age of the tenants. Around 42% of children were over the age of 18 though we could not determine whether they lived at home or not. About 17% were under 5 years of age which meant that the tenant will be at home caring for the children; and 18% had children of primary school age which also means that they may not be available for full time employment. At least one in three tenants may not therefore be available for full time employment because of having to care for their children.

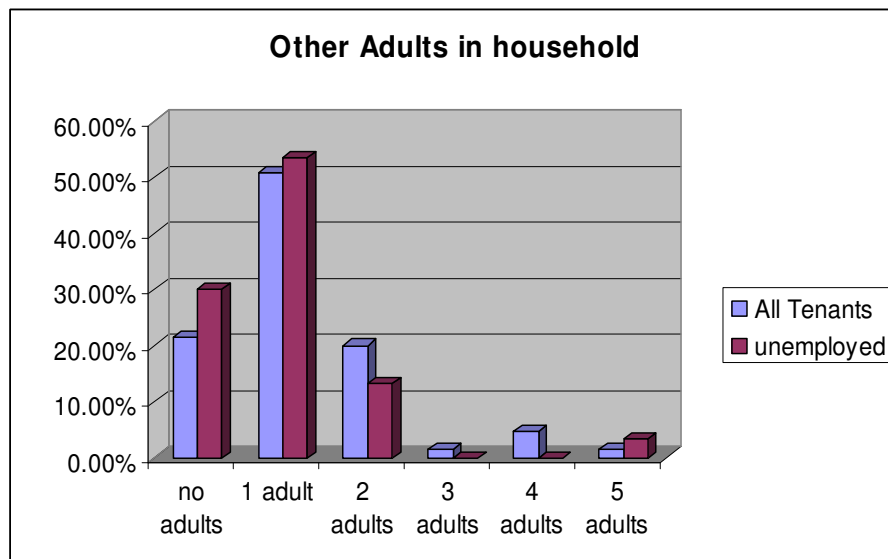
FIGURE 5 AGES OF TENANTS CHILDREN



2.1.6 Other Adults in households

Of the 65 persons who responded to the question on the number of other adults in their household, over three quarters had another adult living in the household. 21% did not have any other adults in their household. Figure 6 other adults in household

FIGURE 6. OTHER ADULTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD

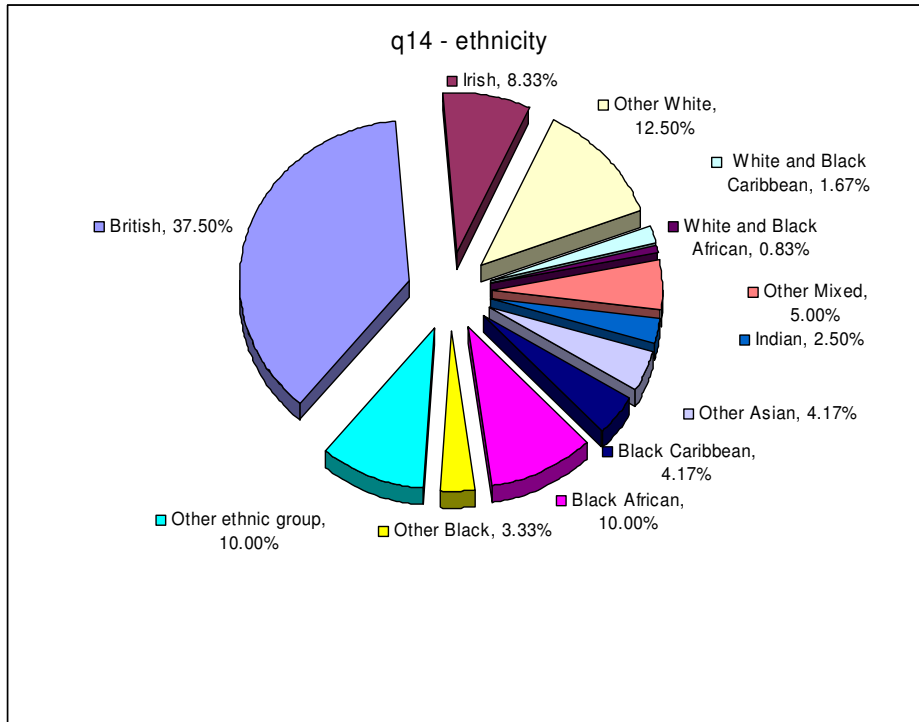


The profile of unemployed tenants was similar for all the tenants except that there were more single person households (30%) amongst the unemployed tenants.

2.1.7 Ethnicity

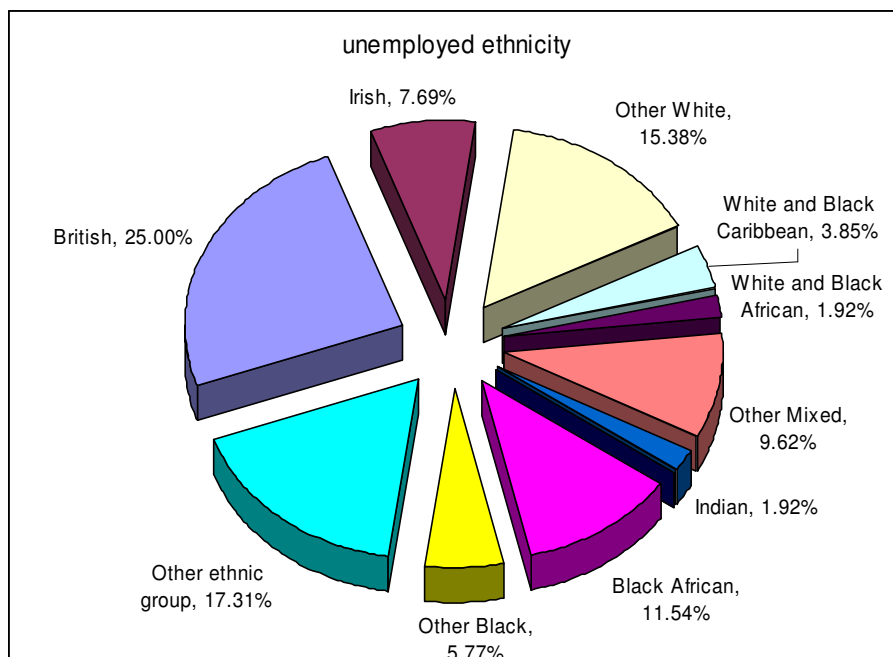
In determining the ethnic origin of tenants respondents were asked to state what they considered to be their ethnic origin. A large number of non white persons stated their nationality or the regional area from which they originate. Using the Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) classification for ethnicity revealed that 58.33% as white, 7.50% as mixed, 6.67% as Asian, 17.50% are Black and 10% were other ethnic group.

FIGURE 7 ETHNICITY OF ALL TENANTS



The 10% classified as other ethnic group were mainly from North Africa and the Middle East. The responses included people from Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and one who was Columbian.

FIGURE 8 ETHNICITY OF UNEMPLOYED TENANTS



When the ethnicity of unemployed people is compared with that for all tenants, an ethnic penalty was clearly evident. Whilst 37% of tenants are classified as British only 25% of British tenants claimed they were unemployed. The greatest penalty was evident amongst the other ethnic group comprising mainly Arabic speaking people, where though they represented 10% of the total surveyed their representation was nearly double that of the unemployed group. The other ethnic group that also suffered an ethnic penalty was the other mixed, who represented 10% of the unemployed but only 5% of all respondents.

2.1.8 Country of origin and Mother Tongue

When tenants were asked about their country of origin, nearly half of the tenants did not originally come from the England. Because we had asked about nationality, 50.89% said that they came from England, 7.14% said they were from Ireland, 3.5% from Scotland and one tenant originated from Wales.

The diversity of tenants extended to the different continents with 7.14% from Europe including Central and Eastern Europe, 1.7% originated from the Middle East, 8.92% from Asia, 3.56% from South America 16.09% from Africa.

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the country of origin of tenants who took part in the survey.

The wide ranging origins of the tenants are reflected in the large number of languages that are spoken by the tenants. A large majority 68.52% said that their mother tongue was English but in addition 19 other languages were spoken by the tenants. These included in addition to the popular European languages of Italian, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, languages such as Macedonian, Lithuanian, Ukranian. Other languages include Arabic, Hindi, Punjabi, Tagalong, Akan, Hausa, Somali, Tigrani, and Lugandi.

Only one tenant stated that she did not speak English and would need assistance in English as a Second Language.

The survey reveals the extent of the diversity of tenants and has implications for how the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) 2000 that provides a duty on public sector organisations such as the Housing Corporation is implemented with respect to the organisations that they supervise.

It would seem that though the absence of language usually acted as a barrier for employment it is not so in this case.

TABLE 4 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF TENANTS

country of origin	All Tenants	%	Unemployed	%
England	57	50.89%	25	53.19%
Ireland	8	7.14%	3	6.38%
Philippines	5	4.46%	0	0.00%
India	4	3.57%	1	2.13%
Morocco	4	3.57%	4	8.51%
Scotland	4	3.57%	1	2.13%
Somalia	4	3.57%	3	6.38%
Ghana	3	2.68%	1	2.13%
Algeria	2	1.79%	2	4.26%
Iraq	2	1.79%	0	0.00%
Italy	2	1.79%	0	0.00%
Ukraine	2	1.79%	2	4.26%
Brazil	1	0.89%	1	2.13%
Columbia	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Cyprus	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Dominica	1	0.89%	1	2.13%
Egypt	1	0.89%	1	2.13%
Eritrea	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Guyana	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Lithuania	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Macedonia	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Portugal	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Sierra Leonean	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Tanzania	1	0.89%	1	2.13%
Uganda	1	0.89%	1	2.13%
Vietnam	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
Wales	1	0.89%	0	0.00%
total	112	100.00%	47	100.00%

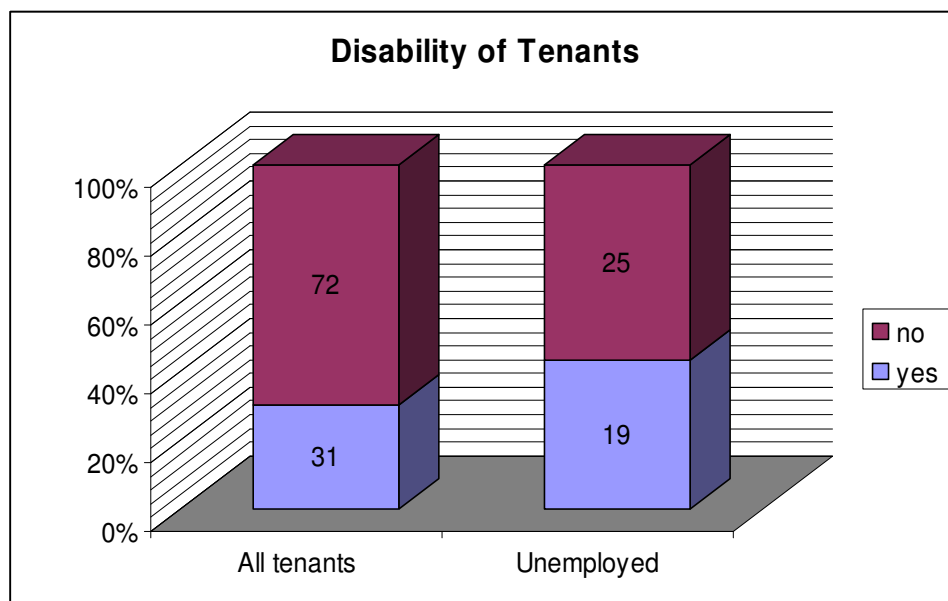
2.1.9 Disability

The new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against people with disabilities. The DDA advocates fair access to employment and ensures that reasonable adjustments are made to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities. The Act recognises that having a disability is a real barrier to employment and encourages employers to work with the Disability Rights Commission to eliminate discrimination in the work place.

The Act also deals with organisations that provide and deliver services to people with disabilities by putting a duty on service providers to ensure that equal access to services is implemented so that people with disabilities do not receive inferior services.

One person in five tenants indicated that they had a disability.

FIGURE 9 INCIDENCE OF DISABILITY AMONGST TENANTS



Having a disability was the cited as a reason for not working by 30% of tenants.

One respondent who has a disability is in full time employment but may be unemployed in the near future, three are retired, one is studying and the others are all unemployed.

People with a disability are in the highest risk group of people who are likely to be unemployed and therefore it is not at all surprising that so many of them are unemployed.

Whether they can get back into the job market depends very much on the severity or chronic nature of their disability as well as their possession of skills. It also depends very much on the adjustments in the work place that employers are willing to make under the Disability Rights Legislation.

During the focus groups we were able to speak to some of the people with disabilities. Some of these have mental health and depression problems and although they would be willing to work, it might be difficult to accommodate them in high pressure work.

One however wanted to work as a self employed barber.

There was one person with a disability who we were not able to accommodate in the focus groups because of his hearing disability. He had skills and was very keen to get back to work. Though we sent him the questions that had been used for the focus groups he declined to answer.

Though some tenants, classified as disabled, are quite willing to work and may be integrated into the job market with some support, the results showed that having a disability is a barrier to employment.

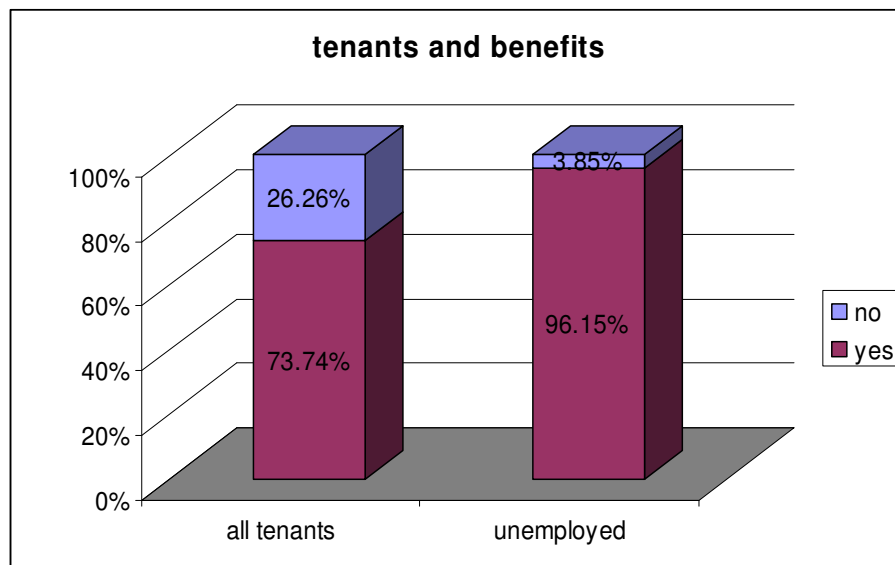
One of the issues that we would have wished to investigate further but that fell outside the scope of the present research because of the tight timeframe, was the extent to which people with a disability could be encouraged back into the job market. It was difficult to explore this in any great depth in the focus groups because issues relating to discrimination and disability are sensitive.

Octavia may have to fund specific research on this issue since the government agenda is now signing Public Service Agreements with local authorities to assist those on incapacity benefit back into work.

2.1.10 Benefit claimants

Of the 99 tenants who answered the question on whether they were claiming benefits, 73.74% responded that they received one form of benefit or another. This conforms to previous surveys of Octavia tenants.

FIGURE 10 TENANTS ON BENEFITS

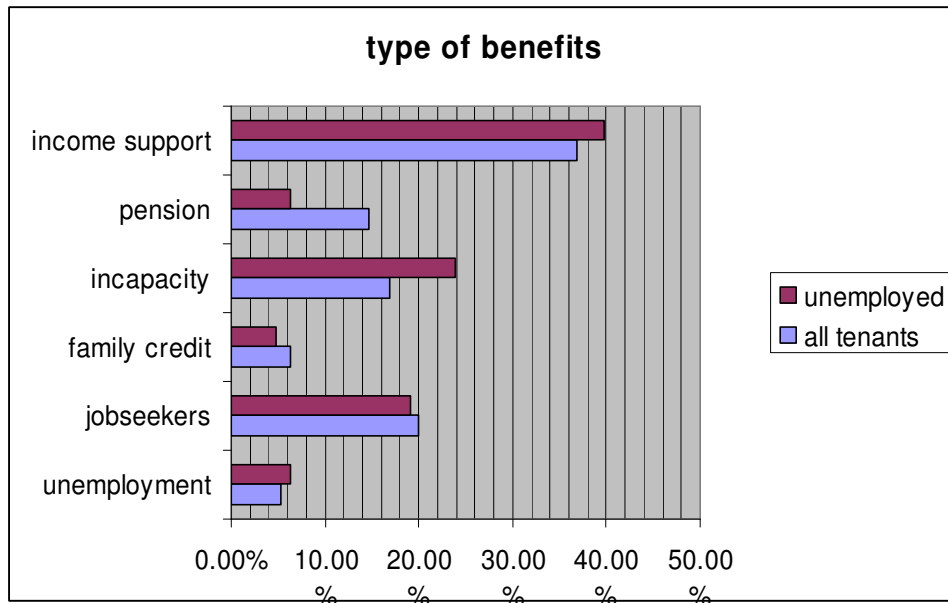


Not surprisingly 96.15% of those who were unemployed were in receipt of benefits.

The number of tenants who indicated the type of benefits that they received was 77 and there were 11 tenants who indicated that they are in receipt of more than one benefit. Another two tenants received three different types of benefits and one respondent indicated that they received four different benefits.

A higher proportion of tenants responding to the survey indicated that they were on income support. This suggests that there are many more families where the main income earner was unemployed. Only 5.26% indicated that they were on unemployment benefit and another one in five of respondents was on Job Seekers Allowance. Incapacity Benefit accounts for 16.84% of respondents and 14.74% said that they were drawing their pension.

FIGURE 11 TYPE OF BENEFITS CLAIMED BY TENANTS



There were no significant differences in the type of benefits claimed by all tenants and those who were unemployed. It was however evident that a larger number of unemployed people claimed incapacity benefits and fewer claimed pensions.

In the focus group discussions we were able to explore further issues around receipt of benefits. There were quite a few tenants who because of their marital status could not claim any benefits on their own.

For most of these who had to stay at home to look after children, they saw the lack of part-time employment as a real barrier to their working. They could not claim any benefits because their spouses were working and they could also not even work part-time because that would interfere with their duties at home.

There were at least six tenants who claimed benefits legally despite the fact that they said they were gainfully employed. This was presumably because they were on low wages and had to supplement their incomes. Of the seven who claimed benefit, four claimed Job Seekers Allowance, two claimed Family Credit and another claimed a pension though they were still working.

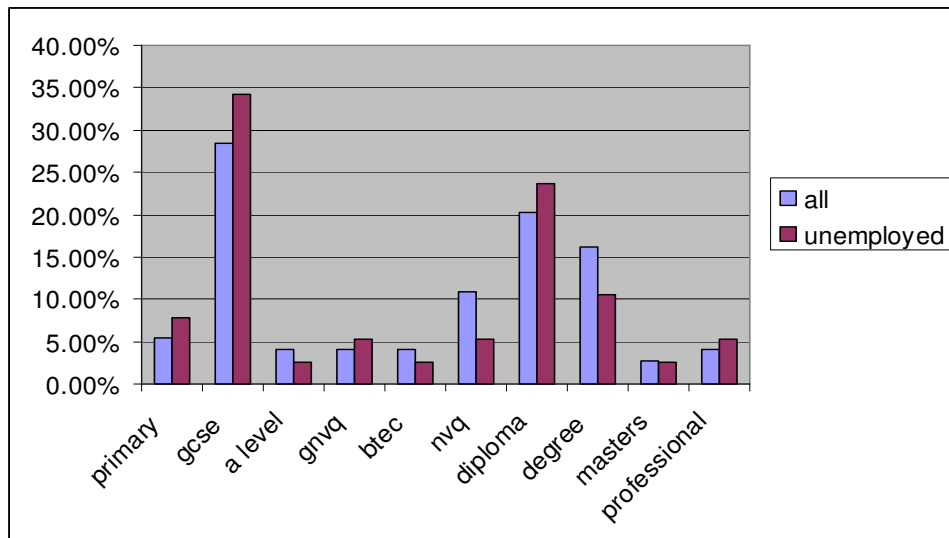
2.2 Education and Skills

2.2.1 Educational attainment

The level of educational attainment is sometimes seen as a barrier for some positions at work and it was therefore essential to enquire about the educational attainment of tenants. Only 2 of the tenants said that they had no education at all, 33.97% had been educated to GCSE level, 20.27% had a diploma and 16.22% had acquired a degree.

The level of education amongst the tenants interviewed is relatively high; 22.97% have been educated to first degree level and higher. For those tenants who were unemployed the proportion who had been educated to first degree level and higher was 18.42% and 42.00% up to GCSE level.

FIGURE 12 HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF TENANTS



Whilst 10.81% of tenants said they had NVQs, the proportion of those with NVQs who were unemployed was 5.26%. Tenants with low educational qualification are as likely to be unemployed as those with higher qualifications; those with practical skills and recognised competency based skills were more likely to be employed if they found the right job and had assistance with job search issues.

The level of education attained does not seem to affect the employment prospects of the tenants in any significant way.

2.2.2 Subjects studied

42 persons responded on what they had studied. Whilst most related to subjects at the basic level, there were those who had studied at a higher level who provided more insight into their vocational and professional studies.

- Those who had attained GCSEs mentioned subjects such as English, Maths, Physics, Geography, and Metal Work as the subjects that they had studied.
- Other subjects studied at a higher diploma level are business administration and management and related subjects such as customer services for which National Vocational Qualifications had been acquired.
- Vocational and professional programme of studies mentioned included classical dance, electrical installations, carpentry, catering, secretarial, accounting and graphic design.

Some respondents had degrees in politics, psychology, child development and law. Computing, counselling, music and education were other subjects mentioned by tenants as subjects they had studied,

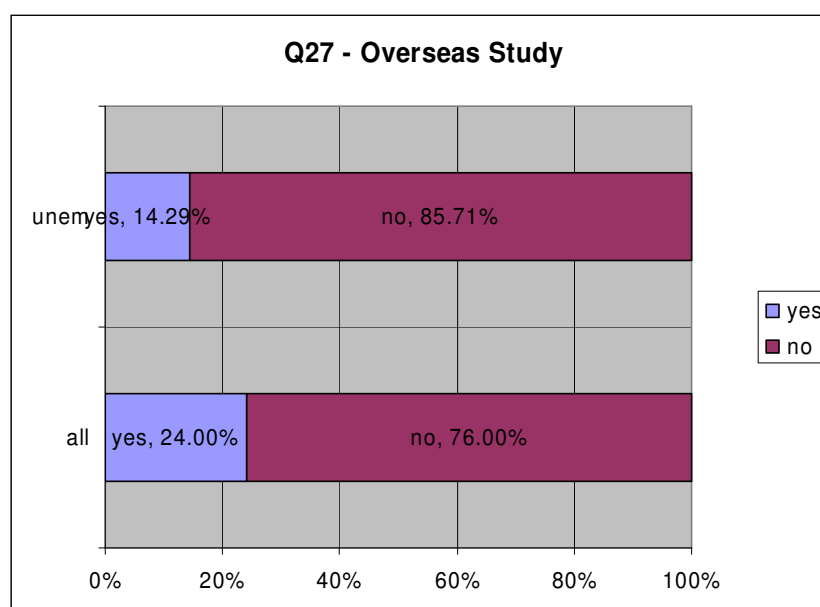
There were some tenants who admitted that they could not read or write and there were however very few that said they had a problem with spoken English but this did not affect their search for employment.

The subjects studied by tenants did not seem to have a bearing on whether they were unemployed or not. There were some highly qualified tenants who were not in employment despite their having studied very practical subjects.

2.2.3 Overseas study

One in five of the respondents had studied outside the country though we were not able to correlate the level at which they had studied. The fact of their having studied abroad however did not seem to affect their ability to get a job. Only 14.29% of the unemployed had studied abroad as against 24% of all tenants.

FIGURE 13 TENANTS WHO STUDIED OVERSEAS



2.2.4 Current Students

Of the six who were students, one was still looking to transfer to another college, and only two were in full time studies, studying building and construction related subjects such as electrical installation and carpentry.

TABLE 5 TENANTS IN FULL TIME STUDIES

q34 - fulltime studies	all	unemp
yes	4	2
no	69	36
No answer	76	111
total	149	149

Though only 4 tenants responded that they were in full time education, there were 12 tenants who had indicated that they were studying. The subjects that they were pursuing ranged from nursery nursing, accounting, philosophy to computer studies. Some were studying by distance learning, one was doing an Open University programme and another had just dropped out of university and was now looking for another course of study.

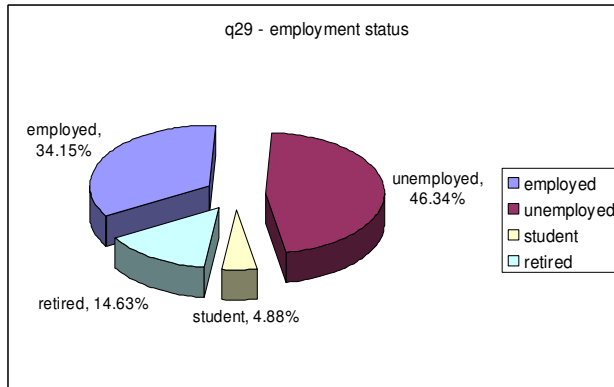
2.3 Employment status

2.3.1 Employment status of respondents

A higher percentage (46.34%) of tenants who responded said that they were unemployed, one in three tenants said they were working and 4.66% of tenants were studying. A further 14.63% were retired and not available for work which is consistent with the age profile of tenants where 22% were over the age of 65.

We did not establish whether those employed were in full or part time employment or whether those studying were doing so full time.

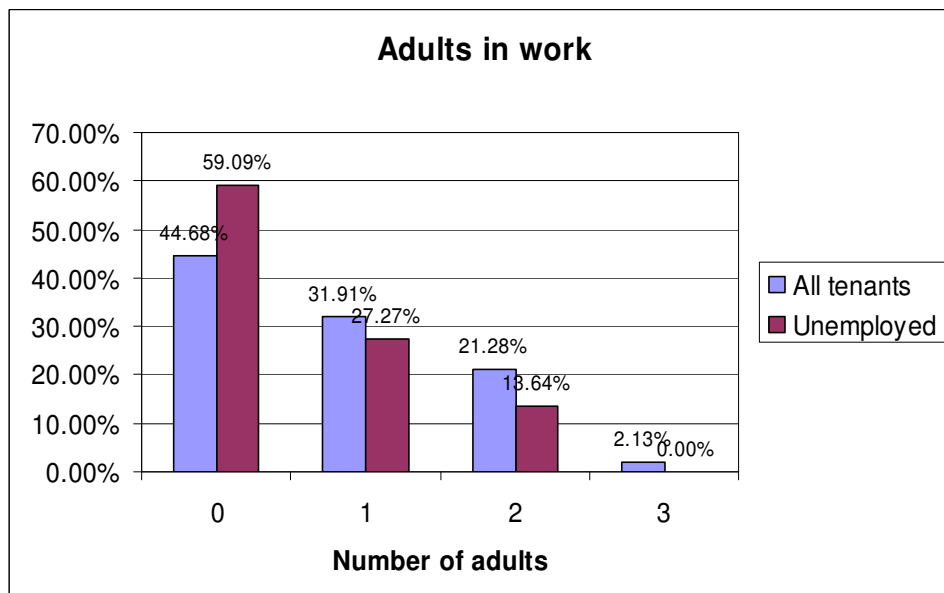
FIGURE 14 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF TENANTS



2.3.2 Adults at work

When asked how many adults of working age were resident in the household, 44.68% lived in households in which there was an unemployed adult. In 31.91% of the households there was one adult in employment and in 21.28% of the households there were two.

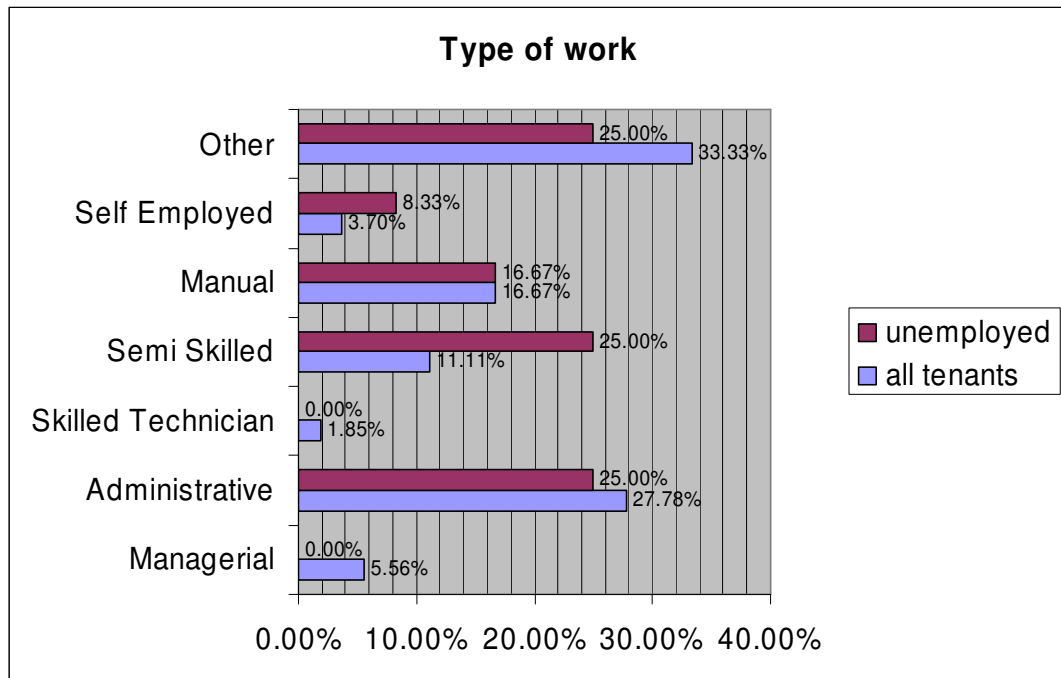
FIGURE 15 ADULTS AT WORK IN THE HOUSEHOLD



2.3.3 Employment type

Of the 34% of residents who are in employment only 5.56% indicated that they are in managerial type employment, 27.78% are involved in administrative and clerical work and 3.70% are self-employed.

FIGURE 16 OCCUPATION OF TENANTS



Though tenants had been asked to denote the type of work based on the Standard Occupational Classification, one third of respondents, 33%, replied that they were involved in other forms of employment which they felt did not quite fit into the categories that had been provided. They preferred to state the exact nature of the work they were doing. In some cases the tenants rather stated the industrial sector within which they worked.

Of these respondents there were

- Four who had stated that they were unemployed.
- One had worked as a laboratory assistant,
- One had been involved in catering and the hotel trade and
- One had been involved in retailing.
- One of these respondents said that they would prefer to be in managerial type employment.

The two respondents who were still studying stated that they worked in customer care and accounting respectively.

For the thirteen respondents who were in employment there was a wide range of responses from people working in accounting, in local authority, as childminders, play workers, security personnel, wardens, in retail establishments and as carers of disabled adults and machinists.

Only one other person responded that they were employed on a professional level.

2.3.4 Job title

Respondents were asked specifically for their job titles and though this question was directed at those in employment we had 45 responses of which twelve were from unemployed people.

These unemployed people had job titles ranging from

- counsellor,
- benefits administrator, and
- customer care personnel to
- laboratory technician.
- One had worked as a maid and
- the other as a barber.

There was one tenant who has never worked due to ill health, one has not worked for the past four years because of hospitalisation and another cannot work because of arthritis. Another tenant is a carer of a disabled person.

For those who were in employment there was an equally wide variety of job titles.

- One is a professional researcher
- Eleven work in offices in administrative positions that range from administrator, office manager, personal assistant and secretary and receptionist to book-keeper and accounts clerk and night time supervisor of a business centre
- One is a housing benefit officer
- Three work in schools as teacher, counsellor and teachers' assistant, one works with children as a play worker and another works with adults with learning difficulties as a drummer
- One is in computer maintenance and programming
- Another is a part time post man and one works as a crew leader with British Airways
- Four are cleaners of which one works on a part time basis.

These responses confirm that the tenants were not involved in highly skilled professional jobs. They were more likely to be involved in administrative and semi skilled jobs rather than in professional or managerial type employment.

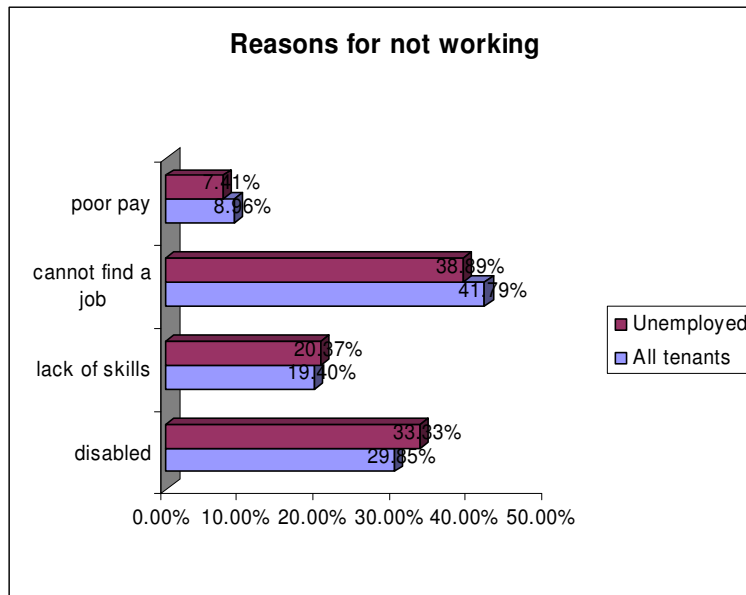
2.4 The unemployed

2.4.1 Reasons for not working

There were a variety of reasons provided by tenants as to why they were unemployed. Almost 30% of residents responded that they had a disability.

Only 8.96% of those tenants who said they were not working attributed their state of unemployment to the fact that the pay they would receive was poor, a larger number 41.79% attributed their lack of employment to the fact that they could not find a job, a subjective reason and another 19.40% attributed their state to lack of skills, an objective reason.

FIGURE 17 REASONS FOR NOT WORKING



In the focus groups we tried to determine the barriers that prevented people from working and to differentiate the subjective ones from the objective ones.

We got the sense that those tenants who said that they could not find jobs, did not think that they needed assistance to gain employment, they felt that they should be looking for work on their own. They were unaware that there was practical assistance available that would help them find employment more quickly.

The initial problem for those who had been out of work for a long time was getting back into the frame of mind to look for a job. With the long term absence from the job market came the crisis of lack of self-confidence, 'will I be able to find a comparable job to the one I did before' and what will £6 an hour do to my self esteem if I have been used to earning much higher'.

There was sufficient training available to assist people with the development of their CVs, completing application forms, job searches and interview techniques. Whilst this type of training is very helpful the job seeker has to be motivated, garner confidence and really want to look for employment, for what could become a long period of job search.

Tenants however claimed that there was a lack of affordable bespoke training in certain areas. An instance of this is that whilst there is a lot of IT training provided at the lower level for those who were not IT professionals, specific IT training was very expensive and the cost of such training was a definite barrier to gaining employment at the right level.

Another problem of finding a job relates to the extent to which the unemployed are linked into information sources outside the job centre and whether they were going to be offered exciting jobs rather than to humdrum job roles.

Some tenants felt that as one gets older it becomes more difficult for one to gain employment and that even those who were looking for entry level jobs tended to be discriminated against because of their age. This however is a barrier that is most likely to be resolved using age discrimination law that is applied as a directive in Europe.

The personal experience of tenants revealed that even when they felt that they had the necessary basic qualifications to enable them get a job, the lack of work experience in that particular field or sector led to failure in getting the job. Those who had attended several interviews stated that they felt that this lack of work experience was a major barrier for them. The lack of work experience in particular fields of work especially for older people however remains a barrier.

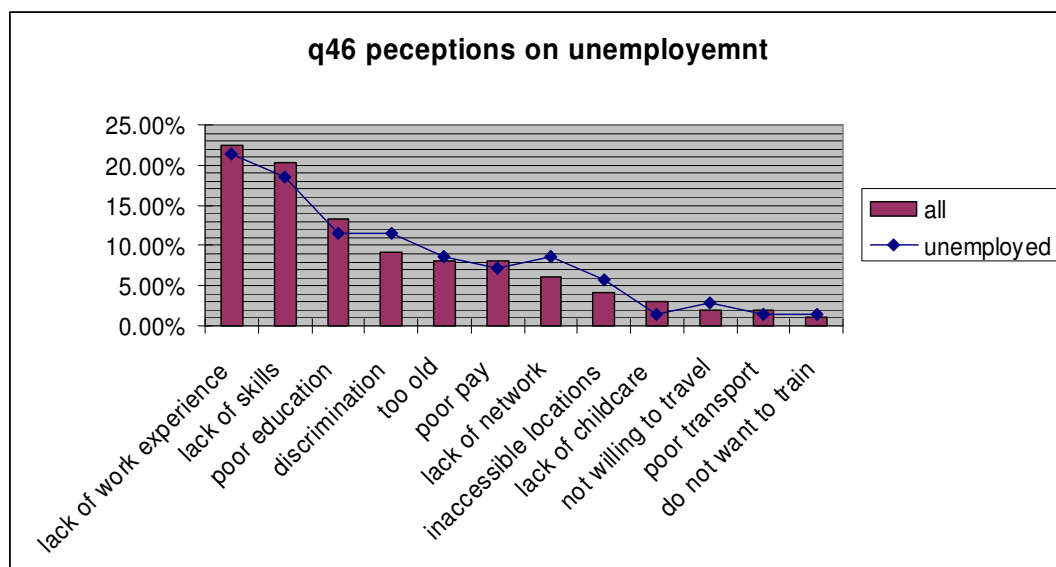
This lack of work experience is often linked to lack of skills and training. Tenants felt that without the necessary skills and training they could not even get voluntary and work experience placements.

An added reason for tenants remaining unemployed is the shortage of part time jobs. Some of the women in the focus groups felt that they would have preferred part time jobs as a means of easing into full time employment. At present some needed to take their children to and pick them up from school and could therefore only engage in part time work.

One tenant felt that language was definitely a barrier to employment. The tenant's view is that there is a need to sensitise employers about the fact that qualifications gained overseas were comparable to those gained in this country.

When presented with an extended list of reasons for not working, the objective reasons prevailed as to why tenants without a job were not in employment. For 22.45% of the respondents, this was due to the fact that they did not have any work experience, 20.41% lacked skills and 13% admitted that they had poor educational skills. This means that as many as 55% of tenants need assistance in the form of training or work experience in order to be able to find employment.

FIGURE 18 EXTENDED REASONS FOR NOT WORKING



Those who felt that locations were inaccessible may have been conditioned by the fact of transport costs and a strong preference to work locally instead of travelling long distances to work outside the area. The low level of skills and the aspiration to work in relatively lower job roles meant that some tenants felt that their search for employment must be limited to the local area and their local job centre.

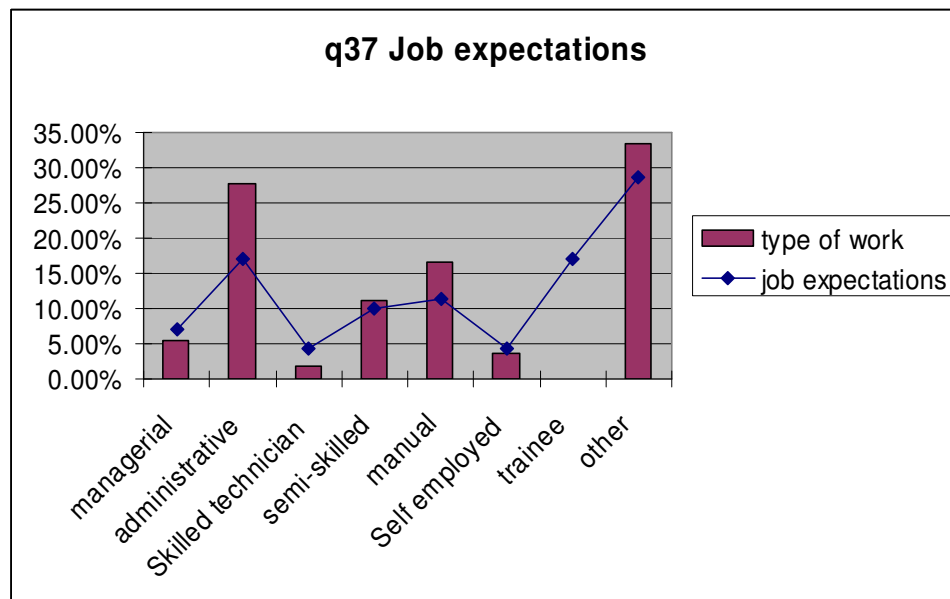
Generally some of the unemployed tenants in the focus groups had commented on their lack of confidence as being a problem for them in their search for employment. Others had indicated that they were more comfortable with searching for jobs locally.

2.4.2 Work aspirations

The job expectation of tenants was matched against the type of work that they were involved in doing. Figure 19 below reflects that 17.14% want to be trainees, recognising that they were not ready for immediate employment and would like some further work experience in order to be job ready.

Only 4.29% of tenants wanted to be self employed and only 7.14% are interested in managerial positions. A larger proportion of tenants want administrative positions.

FIGURE 19 JOB EXPECTATIONS OF TENANTS



Tenants had other aspirations, 28.57%, wanted to work in a variety of job environments. These included, politics, current affairs, teaching, literary tutoring, hotel and catering, retailing, social care, working with young people, graphic design and art, security, barbering and accounting.

Two respondents believed that there would be a need to assess them for any position, one was still thinking about whether to work or not.

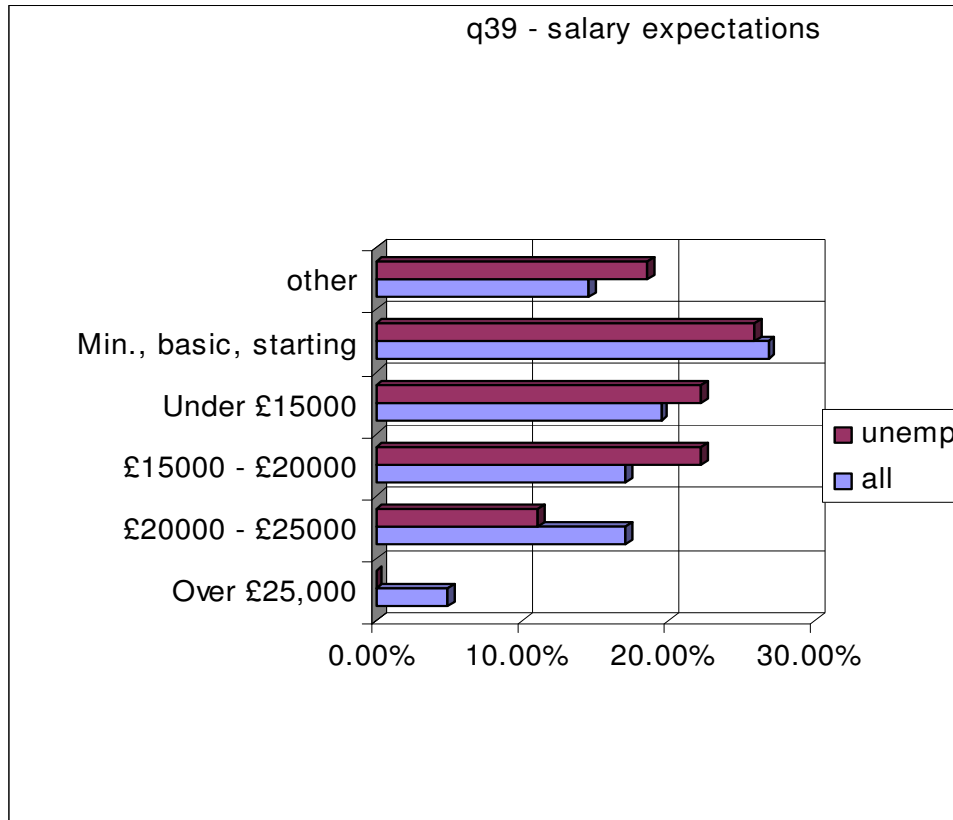
These responses were consistent with the level of skills of the tenants and were also in line with the job roles that tenants said that they were involved in. The aspirations were higher in the managerial and skilled technician type of job roles.

All in all the tenants did not want very high level jobs. They wanted jobs at the most basic levels where they felt that they had the requisite skills and experience to gain employment.

2.4.3 Salary level

Tenant aspirations were also consistent with the salaries that they expected to earn if they found jobs and the level of salaries that they were looking for in a job.

FIGURE 20 SALARY EXPECTATIONS OF TENANTS



A number of tenants were prepared to work as volunteers or on placement and were grateful for the opportunity of work experience in order to get into the job market.

A larger proportion 26.19% of tenants were willing to be paid the basic salary in whatever job role they found whilst another 19% were prepared to earn less than £15,000 per annum

A small percentage of respondents 4.88% were expecting salaries over and above £25,000 per annum when they get back into employment, whilst 17.07% were interested in receiving between £20,000 and £25,000 and another 17.07% were expecting to receive between £15,000 and £20,000.

There were a few respondents who were either prepared to work as volunteers, or on placement. One respondent had never worked and would be grateful for the opportunity of work experience.

The wage expectations of the tenants were realistic and consistent with their educational qualifications, their skills levels and their aspirations for employment.

These salary expectations are in line with recent research on earnings in the UK.

2.4.4 Preferred sector

The most popular sector in which respondents are seeking employment is in the community sector, 14.42% choose this sector as against hotel and catering 11.53%, retail 9.62% and health and social care 9.62%.

TABLE 6 PREFERRED SECTORS FOR WORK BY TENANTS

q38 - sector for work	all	%	unemployed	%
financial	5	4.81%	2	2.74%
manufacturing	4	3.85%	3	4.11%
leisure and sports	3	2.88%	3	4.11%
retail	10	9.62%	6	8.22%
telecom	3	2.88%	2	2.74%
building and construction	6	5.77%	4	5.48%
education	7	6.73%	4	5.48%
housing	6	5.77%	5	6.85%
computer related	5	4.81%	4	5.48%
community	15	14.42%	11	15.07%
transport	5	4.81%	3	4.11%
printing and publishing	5	4.81%	5	6.85%
hotel and catering	12	11.54%	10	13.70%
public administration	8	7.69%	5	6.85%
health and social care	10	9.62%	6	8.22%
total	104	100.00%	73	100.00%

Surprisingly few tenants chose the building and construction sector where work is readily available especially in areas where regeneration is taking place. Prior knowledge suggests that this sector has not been properly marketed as the breadth and depth of job roles and positions that are available in it are not well known. Most black and minority ethnic (BME) people do not see that sector as appropriate for their job prospects and the industry has been stigmatised as a lower skilled industry. Positive Action Training in Housing has been leading the field in ensuring that this negative perception to the sector is minimised and they have promoted the sector as fitting of the social aspirations of BME people.

What is however surprising is the number of tenants who said that they wanted to work in the community sector. This is increasing as more local residents find positions in youth work and the whole vista of regeneration work is opened up.

Twenty years ago one would have expected a lot of tenants to aspire to finance and other jobs in the City. People are however getting tuned into the whole issue of work life balance and also making an impact within the community in which they live.

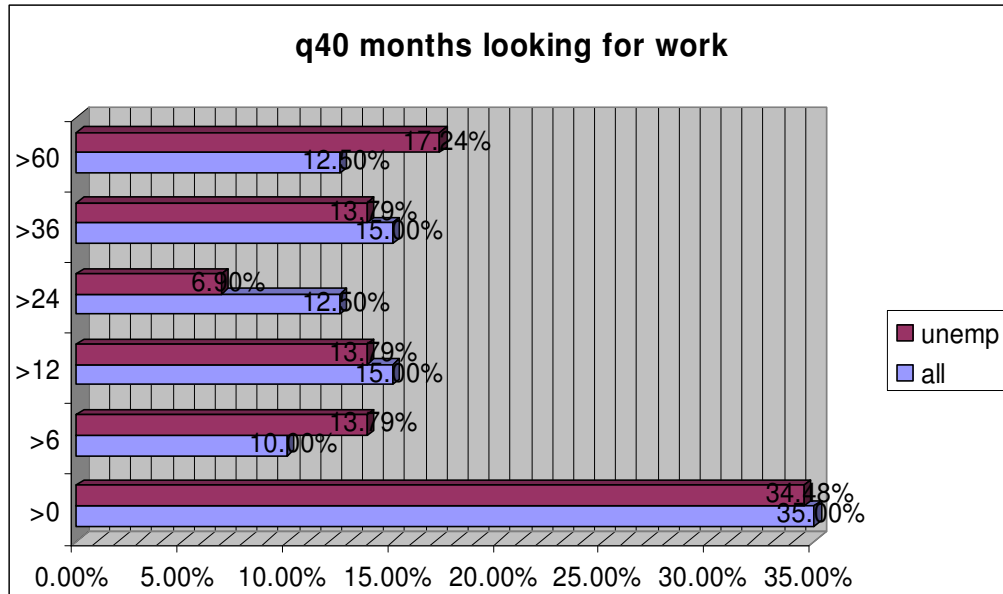
Fewer than expected tenants chose the financial sector or work in public administration.

The choice for hotel and catering jobs is however consistent with the scales of pay those tenants expected to earn given their skills.

2.5 Job search efforts

More than 60% of unemployed tenants have been looking for work in the past year, 27.50% have been looking for employment for more than three years and roughly one in eight have been looking for work for the past five years.

FIGURE 21 NUMBER OF MONTHS LOOKING FOR WORK.



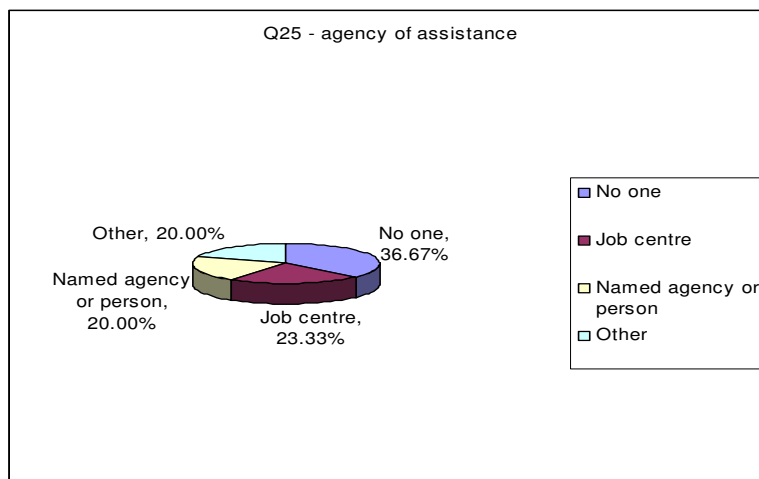
2.5.1 Assistance in looking for a job

Tenants were asked to state who had assisted them with job search and what source of assistance has been most effective.

A large number of tenants 36.67%, responded that they had undertaken their job search on their own without any assistance from any agency especially the regeneration agencies.

However 23.33% mentioned the job centre as an effective source. Others, 20%, mentioned specific variants of the job centre such as the personal adviser, the university careers advice officer and other private employment agencies. An agency, Work Directions was mentioned as an agency of assistance as was Paddington First a regeneration type agency. Others mentioned the social worker and the coordinator of a day centre that they attend as being a source of effective assistance.

FIGURE 22 AGENCIES OF ASSISTANCE IN LOOKING FOR JOBS



These job search efforts were further explored in the focus groups since we wanted to know what tenants thought must be done to encourage them seek employment.

Tenants confided that the longer it takes for them to get a job, the less effort they put into searching. After a long while however they recognise that they must seek assistance some are still confident that they can get a job through their own efforts.

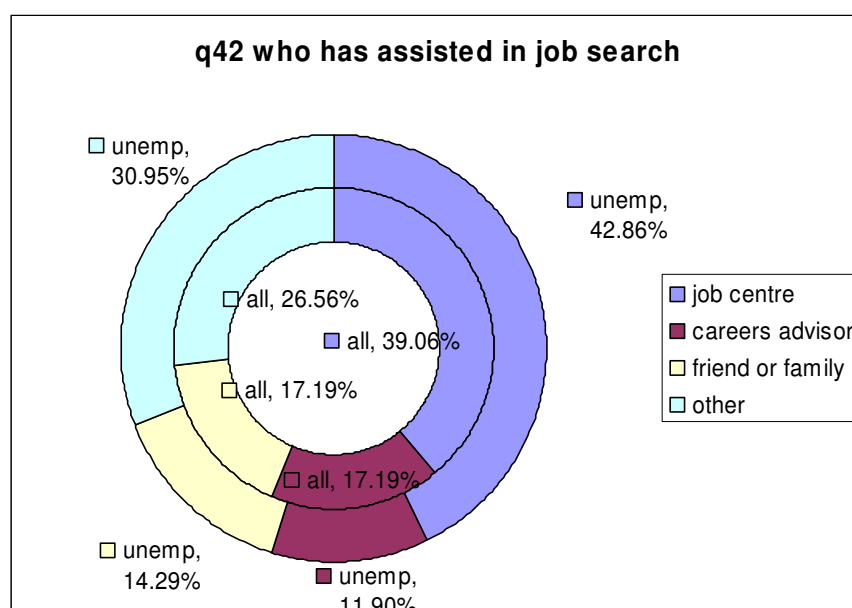
Most felt that getting back on the job search activities was fairly difficult since they would be contacting sources of employment that had already failed them and be seeking to use methods that had previously clearly not worked.

Some tenants with family commitments have decided that due to the general absence of job share positions, it was better to concentrate on looking after their children instead of searching for a job through sources that had not proved effective in the past.

2.5.2 Effective assistance

The job centres have been the most credible agency where tenants have looked for employment, 39% have sought assistance from the job centre and another 17.19% have received assistance in their job search from a careers advisor.

FIGURE 23 ASSISTANCE WITH JOB SEARCH



Over 25% of all tenants and 30% of the unemployed have used other methods in their search for employment. Two tenants have sourced information on their own, a further two have used the internet, four have used other employment agencies and another four have used projects such as Red Kite, Notting Hill Trust, and Broadway projects, and a one stop shop in their search for employment.

- Two respondents have looked for assistance from a disability officer.
- Three had not looked for employment.
- Respondents did not stick only to one source for assistance; one in four used multiple sources in their search for assistance.

Several other initiatives were mentioned by tenants in the focus groups. Some tenants had been motivated by their parents to continue with their job search efforts and others have been helped by friends. But all agreed

that the major problem was encountered when unemployed people move from agency to agency without getting a job. This is demoralising and leads to a reluctance to approach any of the initiatives again.

- One tenant spoke highly of the assistance that he received from Reed Employment who had helped with the preparation of CVs.
- One person had been assisted by Friends of Octavia who seemed, to him, to be more understanding of the problems facing unemployed people.
- One tenant actually acquired a computer purchased by the group.

The changing face of the job centres into a more professional service has been refreshing for most of the tenants. The assistance provided by the Job Broker was seen by many tenants as being very effective because they were able to respond to the needs of the unemployed, send them on to relevant job training schemes and make contact with an employer on their behalf. All this assistance was available within the local community.

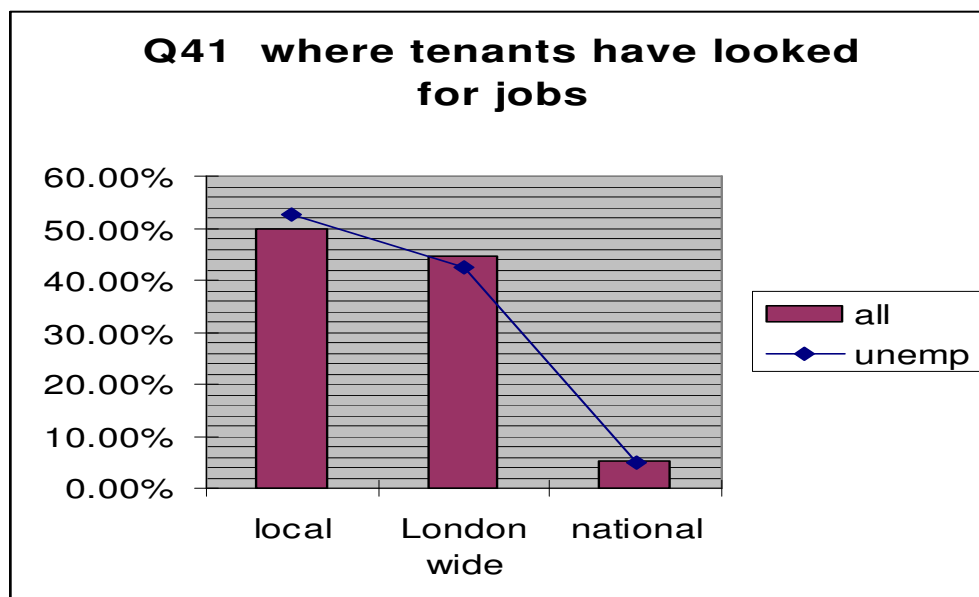
They also supported the unemployed throughout this process by providing them with mentoring.

On the whole though tenants said that they were actively looking for a job on their own and with some assistance from Job Centre Plus and other governmental agencies, they were not able to demonstrate the full range of job search activities such as using the library, the internet, the newspapers and other sources of job leads.

2.5.3 Where tenants have looked for jobs

Where tenants have looked for work depends on their outlook and the type of work being sought. Most tenants believe that they can find the type of work they wish to do in the local area. Half of the tenants said that they had looked for employment only in the local area and a further 44.64% have searched for work on a London wide basis. Very few tenants 5.36% have tried to look for work on a national basis

FIGURE 24 GEOGRAPHICAL SEARCH FOR JOBS BY TENANTS



2.5.4 Careers guidance

A larger number 63% have not used the career guidance route. This can be explained by the tendency of the career guidance service to target younger people especially when they leave school.

TABLE 7 USE OF CAREERS GUIDANCE BY TENANTS

q45 - careers guidance	%	all.	unemp	%
yes	36.96%	17	14	48.28%
no	63.04%	29	15	51.72%
total	100.00%	46	29	100.00%

Older people tend not to use the service and younger people especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds have been quite suspicious of the advice being offered in reinforcing disadvantage.

2.5.5 Training

Some tenants had taken advantage of training courses whilst looking for work. 45% had attended a training course on a variety of subjects whilst looking for employment. These included:

- One tenant had received training in counselling skills
- eight had received training on information technology
- two had attended training in accounting, and
- one in health care to become a health care assistant and
- one had gained a security professional qualification.

TABLE 8 ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING COURSES DURING SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT

q43 - training whilst looking	%	all	%	unemp
yes	45.10%	23	43.75%	14
no	54.90%	28	56.25%	18
total	100.00%	51	100.00%	32

Some of the tenants also mentioned generic training for skills courses such as NVQs, Kennedy Scott, New Deal, and London Open College Network as programmes that they had attended without giving details of the subjects.

One respondent is looking for a career development loan to enable him go on to full time studies.

2.5.6 Retraining

A large proportion of tenants, 79.69%, would be interested in receiving further training in order to secure employment.

TABLE 9 RETRAINING TO GET A JOB

q48 - consider retraining	all	%	unemp	
yes	51	79.69%	37	88.10%
no	13	20.31%	5	11.90%
total	64	100.00%	42	100.00%

The most popular training that respondents felt would be useful to enable them gain access to jobs was computer and information technology training. Four respondents believed that they would benefit from basic numeracy and literacy training. Other types of training seen as being of benefit include managerial and administration, teacher training, and care related training.

- Three respondents would prefer to receive training in colleges,
- eight would prefer on-the-job work-related work experience training.
- eight respondents were interested in training of any sort so long as it would be useful in getting them into employment.

2.5.7 Assistance required by tenants

Respondents mentioned several issues that they felt would be crucial in assisting them to gain employment.

- **Training** – there were issues around access to training whether it was ordinary basic skills training to enable tenants be proficient in literacy or numeracy or the acquisition of further training in specific subjects that would enable them to improve their skills in particular areas such as childcare or construction. Many respondents also felt that computer related training programmes were useful for working in an office related environment.
- **Specific assistance** – CV writing, assistance with completing application forms, confidence building interview techniques and other soft skills training that would enable the tenants to gain employment.
- **General assistance** – assistance provided at the level of the job centre and the careers advice to direct tenants into work or put them in touch with networks that would enable them find employment. The general advice involves issues around assessing the ability of tenants who may not have worked for a long time and those who are not sure about what type of employment to consider.
- **Practical assistance** – there were those who wanted to be self employed and were therefore looking for practical assistance such as finding a hairdressing salon or locating an Avon franchise or acquiring a laptop or a driving license. Others wanted practical assistance in terms of getting a placement with an employer or being offered an internship or work experience to enable them gain access to jobs.

There were several other ways that tenants felt they could be assisted to gain employment.

One tenant felt that a One Stop shop to deal with employment issues was more preferable to the different agencies from which they were bounced backwards and forwards. The essential requirement is that this agency will arrange for their training and in cases of any skills deficit, put them in touch with an employer for work experience and help them further by providing references.

Job centres however may need to specialise in order to deal with those who want higher level jobs because the general observation is that these higher level higher profile jobs are not advertised in job centres.

There was another suggestion that Octavia should hold its own job bank by getting relevant information about tenants who were unemployed and wished to enter the job market and potential employers who did business with Octavia or were in touch with Octavia should be granted access to their bank of unemployed people.

2.6 Regeneration issues

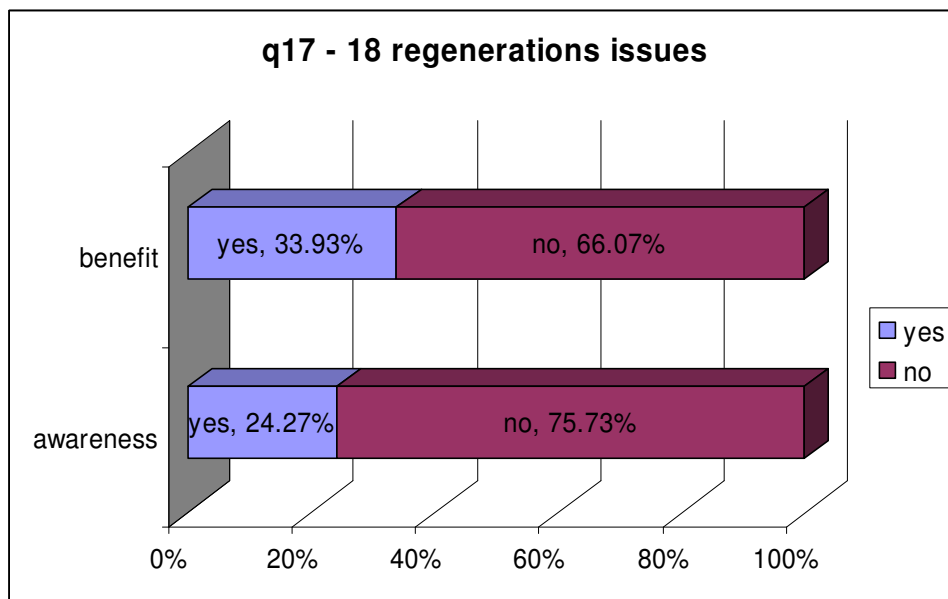
Most regeneration projects focus on making people in the local area employable. In some cases there are strong issues about providing people in the local areas with the jobs that exist in the regeneration offices during the programme of regeneration. However, in cases where the people do not already possess the necessary skills, employment initiatives are set up to ensure that people in the local area are able to benefit from the process of regeneration.

It was therefore necessary to ask tenants of Octavia to what extent they were familiar with some large regeneration initiatives in the local area and to what extent these initiatives may have assisted them in their search for employment.

2.6.1 Knowledge of and benefit of local regeneration plans

Only one in four tenants was aware of any regeneration projects taking place in the local area. This is surprising given the efforts that most of these agencies are required to make in consulting with local people and getting them involved in their projects. We had expected to have heard about smaller projects such as the Golborne and Dalgarno SRB projects and also to have them mention the larger projects taking place in and around the West and North West London areas.

FIGURE 25 TENANTS AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS ON REGENERATION



Even more surprising was the fact that fewer respondents felt that the results of regeneration projects and the changes that they would bring will benefit them in their search for employment.

Of the respondents who answered the question on the benefits of regeneration, only one in three felt that there would be any positive changes for them in their search for employment.

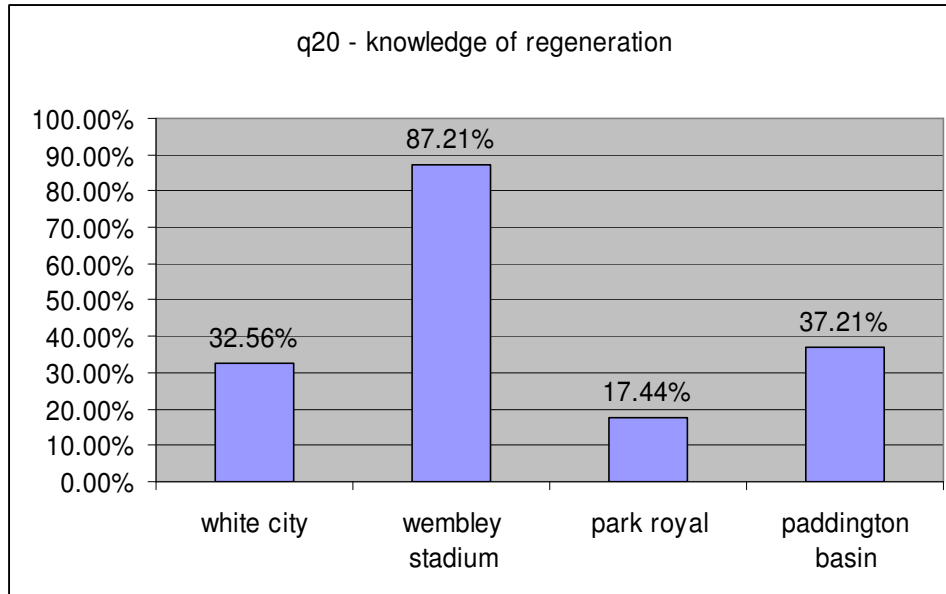
This reveals either a detachment of the regeneration projects from the local community or a lack of focus on helping people into jobs through innovative intermediate labour market strategies.

2.6.2 Knowledge of major regeneration projects

We asked whether tenants were aware of four major regeneration projects operating in the area that is covered by Octavia. These projects were White City, Wembley Stadium, Park Royal and the Paddington Basin developments.

About 57.73% of tenants responded to our question on the knowledge of regeneration initiatives. Out of these, only 10% had heard of all four developments, another 11% had heard of three of the developments and a further 17% had heard of two developments. A larger proportion of 33.5% had only heard of one of the developments.

FIGURE 26 KNOWLEDGE OF MAJOR REGENERATION SCHEMES



The most popular of the regeneration developments was Wembley stadium, 87.21% of respondents had heard of Wembley presumably because it dominates the London skyline and is linked to football the most popular sport in the country. Only 17.44% of the 86 tenants who responded had heard of the Park Royal development. The Paddington Basin, 37.21% and White City, 32.56% developments were moderately popular with the tenants.

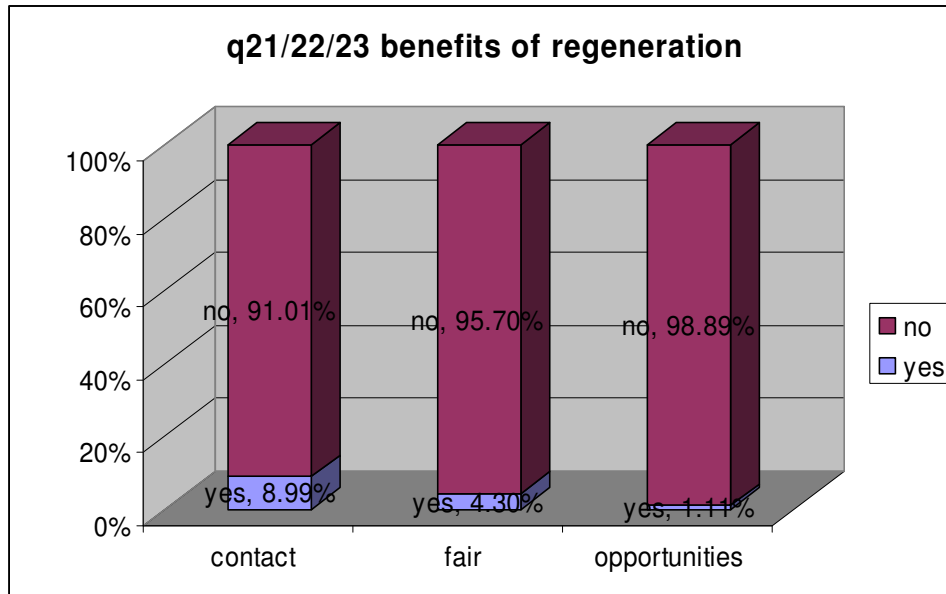
When prompted as to how these changes would affect their job prospects, very few respondents (22) provided an answer. Half of those responding felt that regeneration would bring more job opportunities and make it easier for the tenants to look for and find employment. The positive answers were about, 'more job opportunities' 'it will make it easier' 'increase jobs in the local area' and 'better choices and better opportunities'.

Two respondents felt that these changes will have no effect and another ten respondents did not know what positive effects there would be or were unsure about the effects of these changes

2.6.3 Contacts and job opportunities

Very few tenants had come into contact with any of these regeneration projects; 8.99% had contacted a regeneration agency for assistance with a job and only 4.30% of those responding had attended a job fair or any initiative organised by any of these regeneration projects that would have led to their getting a job. Only one person or 1.11% of tenants had been contacted by any of these agencies with a view of providing them with training or job related opportunities.

FIGURE 27 TENANTS VIEWS ON BENEFITS OF REGENERATION



2.6.4 Assistance from regeneration initiatives

The initial premise was that regeneration agencies tend to help people in the local area who are looking for employment and because they tend to involve local people in the management and implementation structures at all levels, they provide opportunities of access for those who are unemployed and who therefore benefit from the training and the advice that are provided in these local areas.

The four regeneration schemes that we asked tenants to identify as a source of potential help, have clearly not worked in a direct way to assist since only one of the tenants could recollect any assistance from any of these big regeneration projects.

Paddington Basin was cited by one respondent as a source of assistance. He was assisted to develop a CV by one of the projects; Fulham Broadway Mental Health Day Centre has also provided assistance to another respondent.

Everyone else who answered the question on how the regeneration agencies have assisted said that there has been absolutely no assistance from any such source.

In the focus groups we asked tenants views on how they think that these regeneration initiatives can be made to assist them. Their views were that most regeneration projects were about construction and buildings and that even then the contractors tend to bring in their own workforce from outside the local area instead of providing jobs and even work experience and training for the local community. They are yet to see any scheme that would focus on the re-skilling of local unemployed people and that was the reason why most have not approached any of these projects.

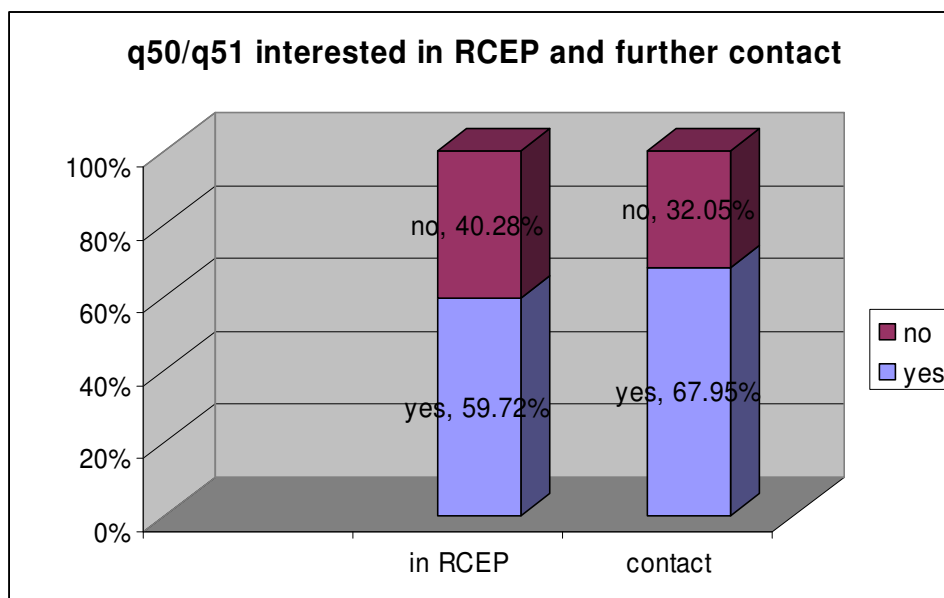
In the opinion of most tenants interviewed these regeneration schemes are not geared towards helping local people.

2.6.5 Rent Cycle Employment Project

A higher proportion of tenants had heard about the scheme and was interested in participating in it.

They were also keen to be contacted with more information about the survey and the scheme

FIGURE 28 – INTEREST IN RCEP



3 Conclusions

These conclusions flow from the findings of the survey and discuss the implications of some of the findings for Octavia Housing and Care as an organisation that intends to provide a programme to assist those of its tenants who wish to find employment.

3.1 Unemployed tenants and their interest in assistance for employment

The survey did not identify any significant differences between the typical Octavia tenant and those who are unemployed. Octavia tenants are resident mostly in the Notting Hill, Maida Vale and Willesden areas; unemployed tenants showed a similar pattern.

The unemployment rate of tenants who had stayed with Octavia for less than 15 years tended to be higher than for those who had stayed longer with Octavia.

Tenants within the 36 – 45 age band showed the highest unemployment rate and female tenants were more likely to be unemployed than male tenants. Those tenants who had only one child also had a higher unemployment rate.

With respect to ethnicity, the British tenants have the lowest rates of unemployment; the other mixed, other ethnic and other Black and Black Africans had the highest rates.

A significant number of tenants had a disability that did not allow them to work. One in five people who were unemployed said they have a disability and claimed incapacity benefit.

All these differences confirm that the most vulnerable groups and those most at risk from unemployment tended to be:

- **middle aged persons**
- **ethnic minority people**
- **women with children and**
- **persons with disabilities**

There was little evidence of younger people being more at risk of unemployment but that was because, Octavia does not have a large number of young people as tenants though there were several who would have been living with their parents. In this survey very few young people had been interviewed because the objective of the methodology chosen was to try and contact the main tenant for responses.

A different survey methodology will be appropriate for young people and because youth unemployment remains a definite problem it is suggested that Octavia focuses specific research on this cohort of people.

Unemployed people had more modest salary expectations. None expected to earn above £25,000 and a lower proportion also expected to earn between £20000 and £25000, which is in line with national average salaries. Some preferred to work as volunteers. They were also less likely to look for managerial type employment and though they were as equally qualified as all tenants surveyed they were less likely to have NVQs and also less likely to have studied overseas.

The most often cited sectors by all those who were surveyed were retail, community and hotel and catering.

A larger number of respondents had heard of the Rent Cycle Employment Project and would be willing to participate in the scheme. They would also be willing for Octavia to make contact with them to assist them with gaining employment.

3.2 Barriers to employment for tenants

The survey identified several barriers to employment for tenants. These barriers included:

- **A high number of tenants with disabilities who are not available for work**
- **Several female tenants with childcare responsibilities who may not be available to work if there are not part time or flexible jobs available for skilled people**
- **Poor educational qualifications without practical vocational qualifications**
- **Lack of relevant skills for the jobs that they were interested in doing and**
- **Lack of relevant work experience**

Lack of work experience in the view of tenants makes it difficult for them to return to the job market after they have been unemployed for a while. It is even more difficult if they wish to return to a new sector and a new job role and there are gaps in the CV and employment history.

Tenants also complained that was not easy for older people to get jobs even at entry level salaries. To be successful in securing a job one needed to have the requisite work experience before applying for the job. In the absence of job placement or job training opportunities, these difficulties will persist.

Finding suitable specialist training programmes was also an issue for most tenants especially when they have taken a break from working for a while and need to update their skills in addition to the soft job search type programmes that are readily available.

Another difficult aspect of finding a job is the motivation to stay focused in the face of many rejections and how to be persuaded to take lower level minimum wage jobs knowing that prospective employees will not stick with those jobs because their desire to find something better that is commensurate with their qualifications.

Another reason that was given is the fact that the benefit system has a negative effect on the long term unemployed. They are scared that they will lose all their benefits if they start working and if the jobs they get are at lower levels of pay then they will not be able to fare financial better than if they were on benefits.

The prospect of getting caught in what some term to be the poverty trap makes it less appealing for them to go and find a job

3.3 Agencies of assistance known to tenants

A large number of tenants have been looking for employment in the past year and had used a variety of methods in their search.

Some of the tenants felt that the biggest problem about searching for a job was self motivation and the need to really go beyond the psychological barrier of wanting to work.

Their job search followed a pattern of

- **Relying on themselves which did not come to much**
- **using friends and family who had provided advice**
- **Seeking assistance from named individuals such as as social workers, and disability officers**
- **Use of other known agencies of assistance they were familiar with that included training initiatives and some agencies of assistance such as Red Kite, Paddington First, Reed Employment, Notting Hill Trust, Broadway Project, LEAP and Fulham NDC**
- **Actively looking but keeping their job search efforts limited to the local area**
- **fewer had been assisted by a careers advisor**
- **Focusing mainly and primarily on assistance from the job centre**

Though the job centre was the most popular agency of assistance, there were however mixed views about the attitude of the job centres. Some job centres, in the opinion of tenants were able to provide job brokers who were very helpful to tenants but others felt that the job centres were still rooted in the old day practices when unemployed people were coerced into take jobs even if they were below their expectations and qualifications.

Some tenants had attended training programmes to help them with their job search though this was not the preferred method.

However a majority of tenants would be prepared to attend training programmes if these programmes were tailored to the specific needs of the tenants and would be useful in getting them jobs.

Tenants were not very familiar with what major regeneration projects such as White City, Paddington Basin, Park Royal and Wembley did to assist unemployed people; they had very little knowledge or awareness of the main schemes, except Wembley that was recognisable by a large majority of respondents.

They were also not aware of the benefits of these agencies or the relevance to them as unemployed people and had mixed feelings about how these could assist unemployed people except in the provision of a few construction jobs.

Very few tenants had contacted any of these schemes, fewer had attended any pre-employment or employment related project organised by these schemes and fewer still had been approached with a job opportunity.

Only one tenant had ever been assisted by any of these regeneration projects and the view of an overwhelming number of tenants was that these schemes were not meant to assist them.

3.4 How can tenants be helped to get jobs

Helping unemployed people into jobs cannot be done on the basis of “one size fits all” since they have different needs and different reasons for being unemployed.

We therefore asked tenants to tell us what things could be done to assist them in getting jobs.

Some of the suggestions from tenants are expressed below:

- **Maintaining a register of unemployed tenants that is updated on a regular basis is one way of keeping in close contact with the unemployed and finding out about their needs.**
- **Octavia could also send out a list of vacancies in Octavia, the public sector and voluntary and community organisations in the local area to the unemployed.**
- **It would also be useful if they could use the rent statements to announce vacancies that are available within Octavia and in some of their partner agencies.**
- **Some practical things such as assistance with transport costs for people who are ready for the job market after a period of training or sustained and innovative assistance would be helpful.**
- **Tenants could benefit from a job and training broker who would be responsible for preparing making them for work, and who could offer mentoring services, references and liaison with potential employers or providers of work experience placements.**
- **Some motivational training and personal development structured training could be used to enhance the chances of the unemployed persons in seeking employment.**
- **Octavia in collaboration with employers could perform a mentoring and job brokerage role and it is important that the efforts of the agencies offering assistance should be directed at the provision of employment in the local areas in which tenants live.**
- **Assistance offered should take into consideration the childcare needs of parents/carers who are unemployed and necessary incentives should be provided to make it worthwhile for tenants to come off the benefit system.**
- **Links should be maintained with all sectors, the private, public, community and voluntary sectors since tenants’ responses indicated this view.**

4 Recommendations

Based on the finding and following from the conclusions that have been drawn, the following recommendations are made.

Octavia should continue to audit the skills of its tenants on a regular basis to ensure that their employment needs are known to the organisation. This can be done on a regular basis by collecting information about their qualifications, the employment status and their needs for assistance in seeking employment.

Octavia should set up an employment scheme that would focus on providing soft employment skills training around administrative and semi skilled grades. The scheme should focus on tenants whose prospects and chances of looking for work will be boosted by practical assistance. Tenants who are most likely to benefit from this scheme are tenants who are most at risk of being unemployed. This group includes:

- women who are getting ready to get back into employment after caring for their young children
- Middle-aged tenants who have been on the job market for a relatively short period of time.
- people with disabilities whose needs are more complex and who tend to be discriminated against more in the job market
- young people who have never worked and who may have achieved lower than average or no qualifications at all at school
- ethnic minority people

Octavia should undertake more investigation into the employment needs of young people and also investigate how persons with disability who are on incapacity benefit but are capable of working with some support can be assisted into the job market.

Greater publicity should be given to the schemes that are implemented by Octavia so that the schemes will attract a wider range of people.

5 Appendices

5.1 Appendix 1 References used

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5. Social Housing and sustainability: Housing Corporation
6. Multiple Disadvantage in employment: a quantitative analysis. Richard Berthoud, Work and Opportunity Series No. 31, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2003
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8. Barriers to Employment for Young Black People in Bexley, Equinox Consulting 1998
9. 'Urban Regeneration and Ethnic Minority Groups: Training and Business Support for Ethnic Minorities in City Challenge Areas' Oc, Taner, Tiesdell, Steve & Moynihan, D, 1997, , The Policy Press, Bristol / Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.
10. Going the extra mile: implementing Housing plus on five London Housing association estates. Richard Kemp and Geoff Fordham

5.2 Appendix 2 focus group prompt sheet

Focus group – 13th June 2006
Employment needs of Octavia Housing and Care residents

1. What are the major barriers to employment and training?
2. Are these real or perceived barriers
3. What has been your own personal experience in looking for a job
4. what must be done to encourage you look for employment
5. who has helped most in your search for a job
6. how can the authorities can assist?
7. how can regeneration developments in the local area brighten the chances of employment for residents in the area
8. how have these agencies helped in the past
9. in what way can Octavia best help to assist residents who are unemployed
10. what do you know about the rent cycle employment scheme and how can it assist you

5.3 Appendix 3 Survey questionnaire



TENANTS EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH PROJECT - QUESTIONNAIRE



***lack of skills?**
***lack of work experience?**
***poor pay?**
***inaccessible locations?**
***lack of childcare facilities?**

How do you want to be assisted to look for employment?
Would you want to be part of the Rent Cycle Employment Project?

Dear Tenant,

Equinox Consulting have been appointed by Octavia to conduct research into the employment needs of tenants and we wish to engage your support in completing this questionnaire.

The main aims of the research are to:

- Identify what proportion of tenants are not in employment but would welcome assistance to gain employment
- Establish what kind of assistance is required to enter the job market
- Find out what previous attempts have been made to get into the job market and what type of agencies have been contacted
- Establish what the likely barriers are to gaining employment
- Develop a profile of tenants who will benefit from Octavia's latest employment project.

The research is critical to Octavia's new Rent Cycle Employment Project. The information will be treated in a confidential way and no respondent will be quoted.

All questionnaires that are received by **1 March 2006** will be entered in a prize draw to receive one of the 5 Marks and Spencers Gift Vouchers worth £25 each

We would also like to engage in face to face interviews and discussions with you. If you or someone you know is interested in joining the project please contact us at the address below.

Please return your information in the reply paid envelope provided.

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Equinox Consulting
Cygnat House
12 - 14 Sydenham Road
Croydon CR0 2EE
Tel: 020 8680 5678
Fax 087 0051 7126

Personal Details

1.Name

2.Address 3.Postcode.....

4.Telephone 5.Email

6.Age ☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 65+

7.Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

8.How many children do you have ? ☐

9.What are their ages ☐ 0-5 ☐ 6-11 ☐ 12-18

10.How many other adults are in the household? ☐

11.How many are employed? ☐

12.Do you have a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13.What is your ethnic origin?

14.What is your country of origin?

15.What is your Mother tongue

16.How long have you been a tenant of OCTAVIA ? Years

Local area developments and assistance

17.Are you aware of plans to regenerate the local area? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18.Do you think that these changes will benefit you in your search for employment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19.How will these changes affect job opportunities?

20.Which of these developments have you heard of? ☐ White City ☐ Wembley Stadium
☐ Park Royal ☐ Paddington Basin

21.Have you contacted any of these developments for a job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

22.Have you attended any job fairs organised by any of these agencies? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23.Has anyone contacted you with opportunities related to training or a job in these developments? ☐ Yes ☐ No

24.How have they helped you?

25.Who has provided you with the most effective assistance in your search for employment?

Education and skills

26. What is your highest educational attainment? ☐ Primary ☐ GCSE ☐ A levels
☐ GNVQ ☐ BTEC ☐ NVQ ☐ Diploma
☐ Degree ☐ Masters ☐ Doctorate ☐ Professional

27. Did you study overseas? ☐ Yes ☐ No

28. What subject did you study or train in?

Employment Status

29. Are you employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Student ☐ Retired

30. Are you on any benefit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

31. What benefit? ☐ unemployment ☐ jobseekers ☐ family credit
☐ incapacity ☐ pension ☐ income support

Type of Employment

32. What type of work do you do? ☐ Managerial ☐ Administrative ☐ Skilled Technician
☐ Semi skilled ☐ Manual ☐ Self employed
☐ Other

33. Please state your job title

Studying

34. Are you in full time studies? ☐ Yes ☐ No

35. What are you studying

Reasons for not working

36. Why are you not working? ☐ Disabled ☐ Lack of skills ☐ Cannot find a Job
☐ Poor Pay

Job expectations

37. What type of work are you looking for? ☐ Managerial ☐ Administrative ☐ Skilled Technician
☐ Semi skilled ☐ Manual ☐ Self employed
☐ Trainee ☐ Other

38. In what sector are you looking for work? ☐ financial ☐ manufacturing ☐ leisure and sports
☐ retailing ☐ telecoms ☐ construction and building
☐ education ☐ housing ☐ computing and related
☐ community ☐ transport ☐ printing and publishing
☐ hotel & catering ☐ public and administration ☐ health and social service

39. What level of salary have you been applying for

Job search efforts

40. How long have you been looking for work? Years Months

41. Where have you looked ☐ Local area ☐ London-wide ☐ National
for a job?

42. Who has assisted you ☐ Job Centre ☐ Careers Advisor ☐ friend or family member
in looking for a job? ☐ Other

43. Have you undertaken any training whilst looking for a job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

44. What type of training?

45. Have you ever received Careers Guidance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Perceptions and assistance required

46. If you are not employed but are looking, why do you think that you are not getting a job?

<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of skills	<input type="checkbox"/> discrimination
<input type="checkbox"/> poor educational qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to travel
<input type="checkbox"/> lack of work experience	<input type="checkbox"/> inaccessible locations
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of childcare facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> too old
<input type="checkbox"/> poor transport	<input type="checkbox"/> do not want to train
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor pay	<input type="checkbox"/> no knowledge of employment networks

47. What assistance do you think you need to help you get a job?
.....

48. Would you consider retraining or skills training before you get a job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

49. What type of training would you need to get a job?
.....

50. Are you interested in the Rent Cycle Employment Project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

51. Are you happy for us to contact you for a personal interview? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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