

## Productivity from Below: Addressing the Productivity Challenges of Micro-businesses

### Participant Information Sheet

The Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CRÈME) based at Aston Business School is aiming to develop productivity-boosting interventions to support micro-businesses (with 1-9 employees) in the West Midlands.

We would like to invite your firm to take part in this research.

This project is undertaken in collaboration with business and civil society partners including **Citizens UK, Punch Records, Bangladeshi Network and Ashley Community Housing**. The research aims:

- To provide a detailed understanding of management and engagement practices and their relationship to productivity in micro-businesses, with a focus on disadvantaged communities in hard-to-reach sectors (**retail, catering, and creative enterprise**)
- To ensure that the business support system is responsive to the needs of micro-businesses from disadvantaged communities
- To deliver practical solutions to micro-businesses wishing to improve productivity and performance

The research process is outlined below and explains how many firms we are asking to take part and what we are asking from the firm manager/ owners and their employees. Prior to reading this please note that if you decide to take part in the research **all participants have the option to withdraw at any time they wish**.

Any data collected will be stored on a secure password protected server at Aston University. It will only be accessible to the project research team and will only be used for the purpose of this project. Data will remain archived there for up to five years after the end of the project and will be destroyed after this period.

We consider participant **Confidentiality** very seriously and we will take every precaution to ensure that no person is identified in the findings, which will be analysed in themes. The interview questions and survey questions, explained below, have been piloted with representatives from the research communities to ensure that the wording and meaning of the questions are clear. **All of these documents have been scrutinised by Aston University's Ethical Board and by the project Advisory Board.**

In the first phase we will be inviting 100 firms to participate in a survey of micro-businesses. The firms invited to participate in the survey will be selected through their input into a previous survey, the Enterprise Research Centre Micro Business Britain Survey 2018, conducted at Aston Business School.

In the second phase we will be inviting 30 firms (ten in each sector) to participate in the research as case studies. Participant involvement entails inviting firm owner/ managers, and a minimum of one employee to be interviewed in each firm. The interviews will take approximately 1 hour, and the interview questions will be made available prior to the interview. Data will be collected from each firm on 3-4 occasions. The participants will be asked to help identify the specific challenges that micro firms encounter in relation to their development needs and business practices, as well as explaining the formal and informal business support structures that they access and what they need. The participants will also be invited to all external events associated with the research.

In the third phase we will be holding workshops to disseminate the findings from the first two phases to understand how the firms operate across the network and to map the Business Support Network. This will also involve interviewing 33 Business Support Intermediaries.

In the fourth phase we will embed the learning from the project by providing three additional workshops for the participants, which will focus on how they can improve their Business Practices to improve growth. This will feature as part of the Aston Programme for Small Business Growth to enable pilot testing of new ways to engage hard to reach micro- businesses and assess their growth.

The fifth phase overlaps the duration of the research and is designed as knowledge exchange to share the ongoing news about the research. It will include seven Knowledge Exchange workshops.