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## Just Listen...

All too often a person's race, religion, sexual orientation or disability is a reason for some people to behave in a prejudiced way. Such attitudes are usually based on ill informed comments from friends, family or the media. Minds then become closed, only accepting information that supports their prejudiced opinions and discounting any other facts as lies or propaganda. This is a dangerous scenario as prejudice can so easily turn into harassment and hatred.

Although there are laws to tackle discrimination and create equality, laws cannot change attitudes. Attitudes can change when everyone is given an equal chance to voice their opinions and when they are listened to with an open mind. One way to tackle this is to meet people from the groups of our society that tend to be treated unfairly. The people interviewed for the series 'Just Listen' talk about their experiences and give an insight into how they would like to be treated. The common message is that they do not want to be treated differently; they just want to be treated equally and to be given the opportunity to live how they want to live.

The interviews have been developed as discussion leaders looking at Equality & Diversity issues. Although each interview majors on a particular issue, they all open up debate on a range of Equality topics including:

- The prejudices people have.
- The stereotypes that have been created.
- Where such opinions come from.
- Treating people as individuals.

## CONTENTS

The following presentation guide covers all the interviews in the series. The interviews are divided into three sections, each section

concludes with a credit list acknowledging those who helped create the series. 'Just Listen' looks at:

- Race & Religion
- Physical Disability
- Gender & Sexuality

If you are working with just one of the sections, you will still find it useful to look through the notes for all the interviews as the series covers a range of ideas relating to Equality & Diversity – many of which can be adapted to support your presentation. The 'Key Thought' at the end of each of the interview notes can also be used for most of the interviews.

The INTRODUCTION and SUMMARY ideas can be used for all/any section

	Page
INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES & SUMMARY	2
Ibrahim - RACE (6mins)	3
Clair - RELIGION (6mins)	5
Linda - PHYSICAL DISABILITY (13mins)	6
Alice - GENDER (5mins)	8
Mick - SEXUALITY (5mins)	10
TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS	11

The transcripts of all the interviews have been provided. These can be used to not only check content but to also help you to accurately quote the comments made.

## INTRODUCTION

Before screening the interviews, ensure that your group understand the objectives of the session – before stating these, ask the group the following:

'EQUALITY & DIVERSITY' – do you know what this means?

Example Definition: Giving everyone equal respect and opportunities (Equality) irrespective of their differences such as race, religion, appearance, abilities or sexual preference (Diversity). Point out to your group that Equality is not just a moral obligation – it is now a legal requirement. Ask the group the following:

What laws covering Equality are currently in force?

Examples of such laws: Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination, Race Relations, Disability Discrimination, Human Rights, Gender Reassignment

It is important to ensure that everyone is treated and valued as an individual. Outline to the group that in 'Just Listen' they will meet individuals - each with a unique story to tell. Just like them, everyone in your group: is an individual with their own beliefs, opinions and values who wants to be given the opportunity of being heard and being treated fairly.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of 'Just Listen' can be simply stated as:

- Treat everyone with respect
- Give everyone the same opportunities
- Don't stereotype

Before moving on, it may be worth checking that everyone in your group understands what 'stereotyping' means. Ask the group:

'What do you think we mean by 'don't stereotype'?

Example Definition: '...a standardised image or conception shared by most members of a social group...'. This makes people PREJUDGE. Examples of prejudgement of others include – assumptions on mental ability based on the newspapers they read or their criminal tendencies linked to their hobbies – heavy metal, football fan. The end result is that: Stereotyping creates a narrow image of people based on prejudice.

## SUMMARY

We would recommend that your session concludes with a summary to bring together the key points discussed. The example below can be used for any one or group of interviews in the 'Just Listen' series. The questions posed relate to everybody irrespective of race, creed, ability, etc. They emphasise how your group should consider other people's opinions and feelings – i.e. not letting stereotyping or prejudice get in the way of how they behave. Ask the group:

What happens if you can't be yourself?

Answers could include:

- You may have to keep your life secret from friends and family
- You may feel depressed and alone
- You may lose confidence in yourself

And if you do reveal who you really are you would you ...

- .... live in fear of physical or verbal abuse?
- .... feel ostracised by society?
- .... face depression and anxiety attacks?
- .... feel you are misunderstood?
- .... believe some friends/family wouldn't understand?

Society needs to treat individuals with respect by listening to what they have to say and accepting that everyone is entitled to their own opinions and choices of how they want to live their lives.

Remember the objectives set at the beginning:

- Treat everyone with respect
- Give everyone the same opportunities
- Don't stereotype

Just Listen ... 'IBRAHIM'  
Prime Issue – Race

After screening the DVD you should emphasise to the group that 'Race Discrimination' is not just a question of the colour of someone's skin. Over the last few years 'nationality' has become more of an issue and the comments quoted at the beginning of the

clip give an indication of the attitudes held by many towards refugees coming to our country. All of these comments discriminate and result in people not being treated with respect.

Expanding on the opening comments used in the interview, either create a Hand Out or write out on a board further examples of such opinions – all guilty of prejudice and stereotyping.

- They're all spongers, feeding off the state
- They all stick together – don't want to live like us
- It's in their nature to be troublemakers
- They see England as an easy touch

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Before taking feedback on each of these comments, pose the following:

Where do you think these attitudes come from?

Answers could include:

- The media – e.g. TV and newspaper reports
- Films/plays – stereotyping nationalities
- Comedians – turning prejudices into jokes
- Friends and family opinions
- Personal experience
- Political groups

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Having established the sources of such opinions you can then tackle the 'opinions' given to the group by asking:

Are any of these comments based on facts?

The objective of this discussion is to demonstrate that:  
Most prejudice is feed by ignorance of the facts.

### FACT OR FICTION?

We would suggest that you visit [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/myths](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/myths) to look through the full list of 'myth busters' and to ensure that you have the most up to date information available to you. The following give examples of how 'facts' dispel impressions some people have.

You may also find the transcript of Ibrahim's interview useful to quote from.

- They're all spongers, feeding off the state  
The fact is that most refugees, upon arriving in this country, are not allowed to work for a certain period of time. Asylum seekers are not entitled to claim mainstream welfare benefits. It is therefore illogical to suggest that people take often dangerous journeys (as described by Ibrahim) for financial reasons. In fact, a Home Office study in 2000 revealed that far from being a financial burden, asylum seekers and refugees made a net contribution of £2.5 billion.

Ibrahim is in employment and is keen to develop new skills.

- They all stick together – don't want to live like us  
This comment totally ignores the contribution made by immigrants to the economic and cultural life in the UK. The Home Office has recognised this and is committed to put such skills to good use e.g. the high percentage of skilled nurses and doctors working in the NHS.

Ibrahim, through his own efforts, is learning our language and wants to be accepted and settle down here. He was desperate to escape 'his way of life'. He was amazed to find how free he was in our society, not being asked what he was doing, where he was going etc. His way of life involved living in a lawless state where individual opinions, if expressed, were often punished by death.

- It's in their nature to be troublemakers  
There is no evidence to show that there is a higher rate of criminality among refugees and asylum seekers. In fact, they are more likely to be the victims of crime in the UK – particularly crimes of violence.

Ibrahim was hurt by the suggestion that he was a 'terrorist'. He was actually trying to escape from our definition of 'terrorists' – the people who killed his father.

- They see England as an easy touch

This is certainly not the case. Most European countries have tough immigration controls and, compared to other parts of the world, it is difficult to gain legal entry into Europe. For example, in 2001, Canada granted protection to:

97% of Afghan asylum seekers – UK granted 19%  
92% of Somali applicants – UK granted 34%  
85% of Colombian applicants – UK granted only 3%

Ibrahim didn't even know he was coming to England. All he wanted to do was get out – he was at the mercy of criminals during his journey to the UK.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Your group have now met Ibrahim and had a chance to discuss society's attitude towards people from other nations – with particular reference to refugees – and to see if these attitudes are based on fact or fiction. The following questions can be used to establish group opinions.

- 'Ibrahim has done nothing wrong'  
Does the group agree?
- 'Our country should take pride in helping others'  
Does the group agree?

Finally select some of the following to find out how your group would feel if...

- Your school/home was bombed and your friends/family were killed or injured?
- Your father/mother/brother/sister was murdered and you were also put under a death penalty?
- You couldn't go where you wanted to?
- You had to leave your friends and family?
- You had to start again in a new country?
- You had to learn a new language and culture?

### KEY THOUGHT

How would you want to be treated if you were in Ibrahim's situation?

Just Listen ... 'CLAIR'  
Prime Issue – Religion

Before screening this interview clip we would suggest that the group be given a simple exercise. You will have noticed from the DVD that Clair uses an exercise to get students to express their own 'stereotypes' of Muslims. This exercise can be used by you in a similar way but extended to include other religious groups.

It is important not to reveal to your group that the interview clip they will be seeing is with a Muslim as this may again create preconceptions.

EXERCISE

This can be dealt with as a group or individual activity. For the group version, you will need to have a whiteboard or flip chart. Ask for ideas of what people from the following religious groups look like:



- \* Muslim,
- \* Judaism
- \* Christian

As suggestions are called out you can either create your own drawings or get members of the group to come up and add details themselves.

Alternatively, A4 paper can be given out and everyone has to create their own drawings. These are handed in (anonymously) and shown to the group.

What is interesting is to see what images they provide for Christian – a sector most of your group may associate themselves with.

Then play the interview – remember not to reveal that Clair is a Muslim.

After watching the DVD refer the group to the pictures drawn by them before the screening.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Where do we get such 'stereotypes' for Race & Religion?

Answers could include:

- The media – e.g. TV and newspaper reports – do we only see what the media want us to see?
- Films/plays – portrayal of ethnic/religious groups – either terrorists, uneducated savages etc
- Comedians – jokes turning people into objects of ridicule - fuelling hatred?
- Friends and family opinions – based on what?
- Personal experience – get individuals to describe these

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Clair talks about 'lack of understanding' of other faiths – resulting in people judging without knowing the facts.

Where do you think you could find out more about other faiths?

Answers could include:

- Web sites

- Local organisations
- National groups
- Personal contacts

[www.interfaith.co.uk](http://www.interfaith.co.uk) is well worth visiting. Interfaith works to build good relations between the communities of all major faiths in the UK. We would also recommend a visit to [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize) where you will find useful guides to other religions and a list of recommended sites.

### KEY THOUGHT

How would you feel if you were persecuted because of your beliefs?

Just Listen ... 'LINDA'  
Prime Issue – Disability

After screening the DVD it should be emphasised that although the issues raised by Linda relate primarily to wheel chair users, the session should be widened to encompass all aspects of disability.

Useful websites to visit include [www.bcodp.org.uk](http://www.bcodp.org.uk) – the British Council for Disabled People promotes equality and represents over 125 UK groups.

The definition of 'disability' may need to be established.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

What would your definition of a disability be?

The dictionary definition is '... the condition of being unable to perform a task or function because of a physical or mental impairment.' One way of handling this explanation is to look at disability in three areas:

- 'Physical & Sensory Disabilities'
- 'Mental Health Problems'
- 'Learning Disabilities'

### GROUP EXERCISE

To help your group relate to the difficulties some disabled people encounter, the following exercise can be used.

### ‘Getting The Message’

- 1) Gather your group into a circle
- 2) Blindfold 25% of the group
- 3) 25% of the group cannot speak
- 4) 25% of the group cannot hear

Your group must now get into a line that is in alphabetical order using the first letter of each person’s middle name. If they do not have one, they need to create a fictional name. They must abide strictly to the role-plays assigned to them – 25% of your group will have no disabilities.

After the exercise, discuss the experience with your group, for example:

How did the ‘disabled’ members of the group feel they were treated by the 25% who had no disabilities?

What did the ‘disabled’ members find most frustrating?

What did the ‘able bodied’ members find most frustrating?

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Linda gave examples of her own frustrations of being a wheelchair user. However, many of these apply to all three definitions of disability. Select from the ‘DISCUSSION COMMENTS’ below those that you would like your group to discuss. Pose the following question before each is outlined:

Can you relate this comment to an example from each definition of disability?

Conclude each Discussion Comment with the following question:

What could we do to resolve the problems?

### DISCUSSION COMMENTS

- Linda talked about being ‘the centre of attention’ due to the fuss caused in getting her to a table. Another example could be

difficulty coping with tasks we consider as 'simple' e.g. using a knife & fork, holding a glass etc.

- Acknowledging that, for example, someone suffering from agoraphobia has a genuine fear that will affect the way they behave. Such conditions are often met with little sympathy – why is that?
- For a dyslexic, being able to understand a menu or train timetable could turn into a major embarrassment. How could such a situation be handled?
- Linda spoke about feeling 'the odd one out' at parties. What could cause problems for some disabled people at social events? Examples – someone who is deaf, suffering from Parkinson's Disease.
- The stereotyping of people with mental illness often results in them being ostracised and treated with caution or mistrust. Is such an attitude ever justified?
- Holding a conversation with someone who has hearing, speech or even attention disorders can be difficult and requires patience on both sides. This results in people avoiding contact. Is this fair?
- Linda spoke about problems whilst out shopping. The points raised by her could be restated and applied to other disabilities. The other issues covered by Linda such as holidays, transport and home – could also be opened up in this way.
- Certain disabilities manifest themselves visibly e.g. Cerebral Palsy, MS. In such cases, an everyday event such as a visit to the park or beach can be difficult to enjoy. Some disabled people face abusive and aggressive behaviour or become an object of ridicule. An attitude often stated is 'they shouldn't be out on the street'. Why would some people hold such views?

An issue that will come up is Employment. Although there is legislation to protect disabled people and offer them equal opportunities, it is a complex area and one that needs to be handled by someone knowledgeable in this field. 'Just Listen' is designed to examine general attitudes and to ensure prejudiced

opinions do not influence behaviour. As such a detailed debate about the legal issues involving employment may be best left as a separate session.

KEY THOUGHT

How would you feel if you were prejudiced against because of your physical or mental capabilities?

Just Listen ... 'ALICE'  
Prime Issue – Gender

The interview deals with the issue of transgender and people's attitude. To find out more about this topic, we recommend a visit to:

[www.beaumontsociety.org.uk](http://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk)

The Beaumont Society is a national support group that assists the media and public with advice on transvestism. European law has made significant progress in recognising the human rights of transgender people. However, Britain still lags behind most of Europe in its legal and social recognition of transgender people and transsexual rights.

### After screening the interview GROUP DISCUSSION

Do you know what 'transgender' means and what the difference is between a transvestite and a transsexual?

Transgender      Gender feelings inconsistent with physical sex.

Transvestite      A person whose sense of their gender is mainly consistent with their physical sex, but who desires to present/ dress as a member of the opposite sex.

Transsexual      A person whose sense of their gender substantially differs from their physical sex.

Transition      A transsexual will go through a process of 'transitioning' while they establish themselves in society, as a member of the opposite sex.

Sexuality      A transgender person's sexual attraction to males or females. This may be inconsistent with gender feelings.

It is currently estimated that a minimum of 1 in 11,900 males and 1 in 30,400 females are transgender.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

What is your opinion of transgendered people?

In addition to the responses received from the group, we would suggest that you look through the Alice Transcript and make a note of what she has to say about preconceptions e.g. gay, perverts and how they are confused with drag queens.

You will probably find that somewhere in the discussion the comment 'it's not normal' being put forward. The debate about what is or isn't normal is used a great deal when people try and

explain their prejudices. Although this section looks at gender, 'normal' is a comment used when discussing different races, religions and even certain disabilities such as phobias, stress, etc. It is therefore of value to spend some time on this.

Try and establish how your group would define 'normal'. With regard to transgender being 'unnatural', the current medical view of the condition known as gender dysphoria confirms that an area of the brain is physically different in males to females. Studies indicate that transgendered people have this specific difference found in someone of the opposite sex. Opinions on the cause of this vary but fluctuating hormone levels or short-term infection are possibilities.

Such studies suggest that an individual has no more control over being transgender than someone who is left handed has control over which hand to write with.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

Having obtained opinions from your group, have pose the following:

Where do you think these opinions originate?

Answers could include:

- The media – e.g. TV and newspaper reports.
- Films/plays – portrayal of transgender people – camp, drag queens, heavy make up, stockings, bad wigs etc.
- Comedians – jokes turning transgender people into objects of ridicule
- Friends and family opinions
- Personal experience

The following exercise has been developed to get your group discussing how they would behave in certain situations towards transgendered people.

## EXERCISE

Choose from the following those that you feel are the most suitable to put to your group.

- 1) You work in a clothes shop. A customer dressed in woman's clothes wants to use the female changing rooms. You believe the customer to be a man. What would you do?
- 2) You work in a pub. An attractive woman goes to the ladies toilets. Whilst away, a male customer tells you the woman is a man and does not want the woman to use the female toilets. What would you do?
- 3) You manage a graphic design company. One of your female employees tells you she prefers to be called Brian and as from next week will be dressing in male clothing. What would you do? What would you tell the staff and your customers?
- 4) You manage a tyre company and one of your male sales reps tells you he will be having surgery to become a female. He will be off work for 4 months but when he returns, he wishes to continue work but as Sandra. What would you do? What would you tell your staff? Would you tell your customers?
- 5) You are invited to a party. One of your friends introduces you to Philip who you instantly recognise as a girl you work with. What would you do?
- 6) You move house. Your next-door neighbours come round to introduce themselves. A few days later you notice the husband in the back garden dressed in female clothes. What would you do?

### KEY THOUGHT

How would you feel if you couldn't be yourself in front of friends and family?



Just Listen ... 'MICK'  
Prime Issue – Sexuality

For all the DVDs, we recorded a considerable amount of material. Not all of this could be included. For some of the information below, we refer to the 'full interview'. We must stress that the comments are Mick's personal opinions and experiences and should be viewed as such.

After screening the interview : GROUP DISCUSSION  
Does Mick fit the stereotype of a gay man?

Mick felt that he did not conform to most of the stereotypes e.g. voice, mannerisms – even the jobs he has had (security, roadie etc). In his full interview, he also stated that contrary to popular opinion, a large proportion of gay men did not practice anal sex – a practice that most 'anti-gays' quote as being one of the reasons they hate 'gay' men. This area, if tackled by you, will obviously have to be handled carefully – it may arise if the comment 'not normal' is elaborated on.

Where do we get 'stereotypes' for gay people?

Answers could include:

- The media – e.g. TV and newspaper reports.

- Films/plays – portrayal of gay people – camp and effeminate (comedies) OR threatening, abusive, perverted (prison dramas)
- Comedians – jokes turning gay people into objects of ridicule
- Friends and family opinions
- Personal experience
- The ‘gay’ community itself? – Too sensitive?

There are nicknames for gay people – do you think gay people find these offensive?

In his full interview, Mick talked about finding most of the nicknames to be comical but did know that many fellow gay people were deeply hurt and offended by the names given. The whole issue of ‘nicknames’ can be covered here – not just relating to Sexual Issues but race, religion, disabilities etc. Some in your group may have also been given nicknames – it is worth finding out how they react to these. Are there different types of nicknames? Could some be seen as spiteful, others as ‘complimentary’? Any truth in ‘sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me’?

Why do some heterosexual men feel ‘threatened’ by gay men?

Answers could incorporate the story that Mick described - how his work colleagues were concerned that he would fancy them. Also ‘straight’ men often feel that associating with gay men will make other people consider they are also gay.

To conclude this section, the following exercise has been developed to open debate on both gay and lesbian prejudices and to monitor your group’s attitudes to the situation.

#### EXERCISE

A nursery wants to employ another Play Assistant for their After School Club. Three people applied. Alan who was gay and open about it, Stella who was gay but not open about it and Nita who was heterosexual. The Play Leader decided that she could not even interview Alan or Stella.

Then discuss with your group:

1) Why do you think the Play Leader refused to interview Alan or Stella?

- 2) Do you think the Play Leader was right to do this?

3) What facts should have been considered? (e.g. experience, qualifications, police record, personality, references etc?)

We would recommend a visit to [www.gaytimes.co.uk](http://www.gaytimes.co.uk). The site includes useful contacts, link sites plus an update on the legislation that affects gays and lesbians.

KEY THOUGHT

How would you feel if you were prejudiced against because of your sexual preferences?

### ‘JUST LISTEN’ Interview Transcript IBRAHIM

#### CHILDHOOD/SCHOOL ATTACK

I remember when I was child, there was always war. It started from the beginning of my life – every day there was shooting guns and killing each other. Even when I was at school some people who were against our government shot a rocket. My friend lost his legs. My teacher and too many children were hurt in school. It was very bad. I remember the blood, bad noises... it was very, very dangerous ... I have never forgotten that.

#### LEAVING AFGHANISTAN

I knew them. They killed my dad very badly. My mum was there but somebody helped her and took her to a friend’s house. She came to me and she cried so much. My uncle said ‘You have to leave this country’ because the people who killed my dad, they wanted to find me and kill me as well.

#### THE JOURNEY

It wasn’t just one lorry; they took us from one lorry to another or in small cars. Sometimes we used to walk. One time I remember we walked for 2 or 3 days without any rest and there was no water, there was no food. The people (looking after us) were very dangerous because they had big knives and were very strong.

#### ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

Then the men called out ‘Stop. Where do you want to go?’ We said ‘We want the police’, and they said ‘we are the police. Come here.’ The police brought us food and drink and we washed our face and

changed our clothes – we were very dirty. Then my friend asked the police ‘Where is it?’ And the police say ‘It is England’.

### FIRST NIGHT IN ENGLAND

That hotel, while I was asleep – there was no shooting guns or rockets or other noises. After that we went into town and no one tells me ‘Where do you come from?’ and ‘Why do you come here?’ In my country it is not like that. No one can walk outside even during the day. They would want to kill you and take your money or beat them or take your watch or something nice.

### LEARNING ENGLISH

When I wanted to go to the doctors or go shopping I used to take my friend who could speak English. But now I find a way to learn is through children’s books. Anything I cannot understand I just underline. I also have an electronic translator. It translates to my language and I write down under each word. After I finish that sometimes I use my Grammar book ... that’s the way I do it.

### MISTAKEN AS A TERRORIST

I put my bag down and went away to pick something up. There was an old lady she started shouting ‘Why have you put your bag here? I thought ‘Oh my God, I know what you are talking about’. I said ‘Sorry I know what you mean; you think I put something dangerous thing there to make a problem – like a terrorist or something. Like you I have got a mum, grandma, sister and brother – I understand what you mean but everybody the same colour does not mean they are all terrorists, It is not me or my country people that are Taliban. We have got doctors, engineers, teachers, shopkeepers, offices – everything. But the problem is the army and the Taliban were bigger and they were in power. I pain inside my heart too much if someone calls me ‘Taliban’. ‘Can you use gun?’ – Never ever can I touch it.

### SUMMARY

I want my future to be here. For me it doesn’t matter from which country, which colour or which religion – I just want someone with a clean heart and good mind to love me and I want to marry her.

It's nothing new to me; I've heard this before. Not just from old people but from young people. Because I'm a schoolteacher. Quite often they see things like this on the news and they'll come to school and say 'Miss Foster I saw this or a terrorist has done that or there's been an explosion in Iraq' and trying to get through to the young people that it is the action of individuals not a big body of Moslems or a religion as a whole is quite a difficult thing because of the images that we see on the media all the time and on programmes and films.

I was invited by a school to come and give a talk to their pupils – it was their GCSE group, about Islam. So I came into the school and I had a big flipchart and a few pens. And said to the pupils, OK we're going to start off by discussing Islam today and before we begin the lesson what do we think of Moslems? What do we think they look like? And they started with a Moslem man and the rest of the class shouted out 'draw a tea towel on his head' 'colour his skin in dark' 'give him a dress' and typical stereotype of an Arab you'd have in your head. 'Give him a beard' – that kind of thing. Then we went to what would a Moslem woman look like? They drew this outline of a girl who was completely covered by a black cloth all over and all you could see was her eyes. That's when I broke the news to them that actually you're looking at a Moslem now. Do I look like this lady you've drawn? Their faces went 'Oh my God, at first they couldn't believe it, they thought I was lying. 'No you're not, no you're not' I said, 'I am, I am a Moslem, what you've just drawn is not representing who I am.' So that was when they started to ask me questions and the rest of the lesson was 'ask miss what she does at home' or 'how does she live her life?' At home I'm just like everyone else, I eat the same food as everyone else – I just don't touch the bacon – that's the only thing. When I go to a restaurant I eat chips, when I'm out with my friends I'll have a drink – I just basically do the same kind of thing as everyone else. I speak the same language, I dress the same way as my friends, I listen to the music that's in the charts, I listen to the radio, I watch DVDs, I am absolutely no different except at the end of the day, when I go home I may switch off the rest of the world and pray.

As in terms of this being Clair's story, really this should be called Khalilah's story because that's who I am now and this is the path that I have chosen to take. I'm just a person, I'm a Moslem but I'm just a person. Which brings me to my friend who is German. He sees a lot of things on TV about the Holocaust. Being a German

teacher in this country he quite often has the mickey taken out of him and people make Hitler salutes. But that happened

50 years ago, he wasn't around, he wasn't born. So why does he have to feel the guilt of something a different generation did. The same with me, why do I have to feel guilty for the actions of other people just because they share the same faith as me.

There are 1 billion Muslims in the world and if we were all fundamentalists they'd be a lot more explosions than you see in the newspaper. But that is all they ever see, they never see the great things that happen in Islam. They don't see that somewhere in Saudi Arabia they too have cancer research centres and they're trying to find cures to cancers. We're just people trying to get on and live but unfortunately there's a few people that give us all a bad name and that happens within every religion whether its Christianity, Islam, Judahism – there's always going to be people that go to extremes. But I believe it's all to do with in here, what's in the heart and in Islam there's this huge idea of Intention. And I think as long as I intend to be a good person, and that every action I do has a good intention behind it, I think that's what's being a Moslem is all about. Being at peace with yourself and knowing that you're living the life where you're not hurting anyone else, you're not damaging anyone else. And you're just happy with being yourself.

And I think the important thing to remember is that when you are looking at a religion is that they are people. We are individuals, I'm an individual, you treat me as a person first not as a religion.

#### 'JUST LISTEN' Interview Transcript LINDA

Imagine you are going out to a restaurant. As soon as you go through the doors, there's this great commotion, people leaping up to assist you, pulling out chairs. There's a whole performance of just making space for you and enabling you to get in so that you can enjoy your meal and evening out alongside other people and that is simply because I'm a wheelchair user. It's as if the wheelchair is a big problem and makes me a big problem too. Well actually I don't believe I'm a problem at all, it's the way the restaurant is built and designed that makes it difficult for me. Sometimes people are so over the top helping that it becomes embarrassing, very patronising and it just makes you feel different, I want to feel the same.

**SOCIAL PARTY** One of the most difficult kinds of social functions to go to is to be invited to a party. The sort of party where everyone is standing up, balancing their drinks and their plates and you find you're the only seated person. So you spend the evening looking at people's stomachs and their plates and glasses, worrying that something is going to land on your lap. And then people don't know what to do; they don't know whether to crouch down to speak to you. In the end, they tend to sort it by avoiding you completely, which then leaves you feeling very isolated and all alone.

**SHOPPING** - Shopping is one of those things that on a good day it's not too bad but horrendous if you're having a bad day. You go out and the whole world seems to be against you. Every shop you go into seems to have a step or a narrow doorway or its very cluttered, or nobody holds doors open for you. Shop assistants treat you as if you were 6 and want to give change to the person with you. And you're expected to sign your name over your head. My signature doesn't look very good if I write it up there, but that doesn't seem to worry them. They seem to think that I must be honest because I've a

disability. Now that's interesting isn't it? Because I might not be honest. There's nothing to say that all disabled people will be honest, in the same way that you wouldn't say that all disabled people will be nice because they are absolutely not.

**DISLIKES** - I don't like it when people lean on my wheelchair to talk to me. They bend down and lean into my face. You wouldn't go up to someone and lean on them would you? But if someone leans on my wheelchair, they're leaning on me and I don't like that at all, people are too close at that point. I don't like it when there's an assumption that you can't be a disabled person out on your own. That you must always have someone with you, taking care of you. Well actually most of us can be quite OK out on our own if we're able to do that. Sometimes they talk over my head and say 'How is she today?' 'It's nice to see her out.' Which makes me laugh. You have to have a sense of humour because it's a very essential thing alongside disability. What I need is for you to stand about 6 feet away so that I'm not having to crane my neck up to speak to you and you're not having to crouch down to speak to me. What I don't like is being left outside. The business of 'We'll only be a minute'. That minute for me seems like an hour while I'm sat outside and at that point you're prey to all sorts of people who come by and want to stop and talk to you. You have to be very,

very careful when you are left parked outside somewhere so you don't look as if you're collecting, you don't look as if you've been abandoned and you don't look as if you want someone to come up and talk to you.

HOLIDAYS - When you go on holiday you've got to do a huge amount of planning – it's like a military operation. You can't go on the Internet and find a last minute bargain because it's not going to work for you. And you can't trust every hotel that says it's got disabled facilities, because their idea and my idea of a disabled facility are quite different. So you hunt around for accommodation where you might want to stay. You've then got to ring up and check the facilities – you may even have to do a pre-visit if it's in this country to check out the accommodation. If you're going abroad it can work very well but it can be a nightmare. It depends on your forward planning. I think with the arrival of new legislation, hotels are getting a bit better but they still haven't got it right. You also have to think about where you're actually going to go during your holiday, so it's not enough just to be able to get into the hotel and out again. You may also want to visit tourist attractions, get into new shopping centres – all the sorts of things people want to do when they're on holiday. And again you have to research before you can go and be sure that the holiday will work for you.

HOME – House hunting - we had to be careful about the area before we even got to where the house was because you've got to think about whether you've got pavements that are wide enough, whether you're on a hill so you've got a very difficult journey either out or in to your property. We also thought about whether there were shops, schools, and chemists within a reasonable distance. When you get to the house itself, you have to think about what's the driveway like – what's the access to the property? And then you get to the front door – is it level? Is the hallway wide enough? Can you get into all the rooms and so on? It isn't easy to simply go out as a prospective purchaser and buy a property that's wheelchair accessible. What I need to do is win the lottery then have a purpose built bungalow because what most of us do is we

live in a compromise. So we buy a house or a property and we have some adaptations made to it to make it so you can live in it. Just in the same way my house here has had the doors widened, sliding doors put in, an extra bit on the kitchen. Then the kitchen refitted so I can use the sink and the oven and so on. The bathroom has also been refitted so we don't have a bath; we have



what's called a flush floor shower so you can just wheel into the shower. Once you've done all that you don't have the same option of moving house as other people do. So you tend to stay in the same house for long periods of your life.

TRANSPORT - We've been waiting for years to be able to get onto a bus at a bus stop the same way as other people do. But we're not in a climate yet where all buses are accessible. We haven't got any confidence, as disabled people, that the bus arriving will have a ramp and you'll be able to get onto it. We're not sure whether the bus driver will get out of his bus and assist you to get to the space that's yours on the bus. In any case, that might be full of pushchairs and babies and other wheelchair users so you may not be able to get on even if it is accessible.

LANGUAGE A lot of people get worried about how they should talk to or approach a disabled person. That gets them all tied up in knots. If they could just act naturally and go up to the person and ask 'Would you like some assistance? Is there anything I can do for you?' or just say 'Hello' or whatever then that's fine. They don't need to get themselves all caught up as to whether they will upset the person by saying the wrong thing. If you've got to describe me then I'm a wheelchair user because it's just a piece of equipment from my point of view, it's a tool. It's as important to me as your shoes are to you but what I am not is, I am not wheelchair bound and I'm not confined to it. Because if you talk about someone who is wheelchair bound or confined, you're turning the wheelchair into a negative. You need to try and keep it as a positive. It is my particular hate the way the media write about disabled people and they'll start with a tragic, brave sufferer of something or other whose been wheelchair bound for x number of years and really what does that tell you? It fills you full of negatives about that person's life when actually if you were to simply say 'Fred, who's 90, has always used a wheelchair has done all sorts of things in his life and went to mainstream school, got married, had a family, went out to work, did everything everyone else does' – that's a much more positive way to portray him – he doesn't need the tragic, brave stuff.

## SUMMARY

Disabled people contribute equally to society. We aren't necessarily a drain on the public purse. We have the same abilities to run our homes, look after our families, get jobs, and make a contribution to the voluntary sector as anyone else. So I wouldn't

want us always to be seen as being 'in receipt of' services or whatever because that is also the wrong way to look at disability. I want society to stop treating disabled people as 'the problem', because we are not a problem, it's the way society has been organised, if you like. So I want society to treat us equally as if we are the same as everyone else but we perhaps need that little bit of extra assistance or a bit more understanding ... so that would be more ideal if that could happen, I would be very pleased...I'd also be please if everyone got rid of all those gravel paths that we have in this country – makes it easier to get around.

### 'JUST LISTEN' Interview Transcript ALICE

It's not easy being transgendered. People often assume we're gays, paedophiles, poofs perverts. It's simply not the case. We're just ordinary people leading ordinary lives – although we are happy to be doing it in the disguise of a woman rather than a man. This is about a lifestyle; this is not about any sort of fetish or dressing up game or anything like that. It's about a lifestyle, a way of life. We choose to live this way, rather than a man we choose to live as a woman. We're simply trying to put right what nature got wrong. Women generally find this accepting. We can talk to them about all sorts of subjects like shopping, clothes, make up. Men on the other hand find it difficult to accept us. To them why would a man want to put on a dress? To them it's not normal. They feel in some way their masculinity is threatened – they tend to stay back a little bit.

Many transgendered people are happily married, have wives, girlfriends. They live an ordinary life but this is something they feel they must do to make part of their life. Generally partners I've spoken to are very accepting of their husband's activity in the world of cross-dressing.

I've been doing this for many, many years. I felt something was wrong at an early age and it's only in these later years that I've had the opportunities to express my true feelings about myself and really be the person that I should have been from day one. When I first appeared to my friends as Alice, they were all very accepting. They all knew that it was really I deep down. Nothing had changed, it was the same person inside, just that my external

appearance was different. I was treated no differently, I've lost no friends – in fact I've probably gained friends.

Many people keep their true feelings hidden for fear of being rejected by society. It's difficult to walk into a pub or restaurant without somebody making a comment or perhaps the proprietor of the establishment not wanting to serve you for some reason. I can see where they're coming from because they don't want to get a reputation of being a gay club or turning away other customers. But if they stopped and thought – they are here for the same reason everybody else is. Just want a meal, just want a quiet drink. We just want to get on with our lives. Whilst out shopping, I'm no different than anybody else. I get caught short and I need the toilet. So I always use the ladies. I'm dressed like a lady, I want to be a lady and in my mind I am a lady. So therefore I use the ladies, it's a lot easier.

For every transgendered person that you spot in the High Street, in the past at least a dozen or more would have walked past you – totally unnoticed. Which is the way we want to be, to blend in with everybody else. To look, act, dress the part. Occasionally you hear comments in the streets 'Oh it's a man, it's a guy, it's a geezer. Oh look there's a transvestite.' But why do they do they make these comments? They're not actually achieving anything. I just ignore them. I just pretend they're making those comments about somebody else and I continue with my day-to-day life. So why do they make these comments. It's probably due to a total lack of understanding of our way of life

Those on the media will portray us as camp, effeminate – more the drag element rather than as ordinary human beings. They are just trying to over sensationalise everything because that's what sells newspapers, that's what makes people watch television programmes or listen to the radio. People have misconceptions about us. If they take the trouble to understand our way of life, understand our feelings and realise they wouldn't like comments made about them in the streets. So why do they do it to us? I have feelings the same as them. If they put themselves in my shoes, they wouldn't like it I'm sure. So why do they do it?

I'd like to see better awareness and acceptance of all transgendered people in society. Ordinary people in the streets to accept us as normal, what we would class as normal. More understanding, more awareness would help make my life and the

lives of other transgendered people a lot more tolerant and acceptable.

### ‘JUST LISTEN’ Interview Transcript MICK

According to people I’m not meant to do play things like rugby, mountain climb. I’m not meant to get my hands dirty. I’m meant to squeal if I see a spider, I’m meant to do hairdressing, maybe flower arranging. I’m not meant to talk like this either, I’m more meant to talk like this sort of thing. Because that’s the way people perceive people like myself. I found out at the age of 11 or realised at the age of 11 that I was gay. I went through a stage of, in a sense, hating myself because I didn’t like keeping secrets from my family. But because of the way I was brought up, I felt that it was something you had to keep to yourself because if you did tell people, everybody would hate you.

Like when I came out to my father, he accepted it in a sense with the attitude ‘Oh he’ll get over it, it’s a phase he’s going through, he’ll turn out to be normal as he grows up’ But because of the taunts at school it took me 11 years before I could tell him. It’s not a mental illness, it’s not a phase, it is the way somebody is. It’s the way they live, they’re going to make a life, they’ll still have a job, they’ll still care for people, they’ll still fall in love – the only difference is that they’ll do it with another person of the same sex. So where is the problem with that?

I remember an incident when I went into work when I was doing security and actually came out. I actually thought ‘Yeah I’ve got to do this’ and told my work colleagues that I was gay. But as soon as I told them that I was gay, things changed. Most of them didn’t want to go to the pub with me, they didn’t want me in the same caravan as them, they didn’t want me using the same shower blocks. Initially I didn’t understand it. I thought why has it changed? And then I sat back and thought instead of just wondering why not ask? And I did, I asked the bosses son and he said they’re not sure which one you fancy. And I said well lucky enough, at the time I could be truthful, I turned round and said ‘Not being funny, but I don’t fancy any of them. They’re not my type.’ Because that isn’t me, that’s not the way I act. It’s not the way a lot of gay people act. Its more the way people perceive but people’s perceptions are quite often wrong because you never know who is

standing next to you. They might be gay, you can't tell unless they actually speak to you and tell you that they are.

I did get attacked by a group of lads once in Leicester. One of them happened to be one of my mates who I came out to. People say to me, don't you hate them for that, don't you hate your mate for doing that. No I don't. Because it wasn't his fault, wasn't their fault, wasn't my fault. It was society as a whole because the way you're brought up is literally 'Gay is wrong'. If you don't accept it you'll do everything to try and stop it. And that's all they were doing because they'd been brought up thinking 'gay is wrong'. Well let's punish the gay.

I think if I was asked how I want to change – well how I want society to change in a sense. I think the biggest thing, well two things, is one – accept me for me, don't look at anything else, and just accept me for me as a person. And the second thing is don't prejudge people because prejudging them, you won't have any friends.