



Home Office

Mystery shopping to test the potential for discrimination within the private rental sector

(part of the Right to Rent evaluation)

Research Report 85

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October 2015

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the consultative panel members and all those who assisted in the design of questionnaire and the shopper scenarios. Particular thanks to all the shoppers for conducting the encounters.

Thanks to colleagues within Home Office Science: Migration and Border Analysis for this report. In particular Claire Brickell, Tom Bucke, Jon Burchell, Miriam Davidson, Ewan Kennedy, Rebecca Linley, Jon Simmons and Andrew Zurawan.

Executive Summary

From 1 December 2014 landlords and letting agents in the local authority areas of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton (phase one locations) have been required to check that new tenants have the right to reside in the UK before offering a new tenancy. This is known as the Right to Rent scheme. In early 2015 Home Office Science commissioned independent research to measure the extent to which the Right to Rent scheme has any adverse impacts in the form of racial discrimination.

This mystery shopping-based research project did not find evidence of systemic discrimination against Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) would-be renters, in either the phase one Right to Rent location or comparator research areas. As this report shows, the experience of mystery shoppers representing this group was variable in absolute and relative terms as they passed along the rental enquiry stages in both the comparator and phase one locations, but this was also true of the White British mystery shoppers. Importantly, none of the BME mystery shoppers *felt* discriminated against as a potential renter in the 166 paired encounters that took place during the research project.

BME mystery shoppers received a more positive reception to their rental enquiries from agents and landlords than their White British counterparts across both phase one and comparator locations. This was true, both in terms of a stated ability to assist with the enquiry and the perceived manner of the agent/landlord in their dealings with the shopper. Progressing further into the enquiry scenarios, BME shoppers were in fact more likely to be offered a property viewing in the phase one locations.

In the phase one locations, the most significant differences in recorded experience involved a higher propensity for BME shoppers to be asked qualifying questions about their ability to provide a guarantor and a reference, and how long they had lived in the local area. These actions could be interpreted as the landlord/agent demonstrating a greater interest in the potential renter and wanting to progress the enquiry more speedily, or the landlord/agent trying to place more hurdles in the path of the enquirer and deter the shopper from proceeding further. It was the case that the additional burden of questions for BME shoppers tended to result in more positive outcomes for this group.

In the phase one locations BME enquirers were less likely to be told that suitable rental property would become available in the future, where they were not given the opportunity to view a property immediately, and were more likely to be advised of additional fees linked to renting than White British enquirers.

The research found that in the early stages of enquiry, the vast majority of agents and landlords did *not* explore the leave to remain in the UK of potential renters, regardless of location, ethnicity or shopper scenario. This highlights a potential need for reinforcement of the guidance on this obligation to both groups within the private rental sector. The key findings of the report are detailed below.

- A number of differences were observed between the experiences of the two shopper groups (White British and BME) in the early stages of the tenant enquiry journey. However, for the most part these trends were replicated in both the phase one and comparator locations.
- Differences evident between shopper groups in both areas included BME shoppers typically reporting a more positive initial encounter with the letting agent or landlord. This positivity was both in terms of the manner of the staff member they dealt with and the outcome of the first contact, with a higher proportion of BME shoppers in both the phase one and comparator locations receiving the offer of registering with the letting agent or being placed on a mailing list.
- An exception at this early stage of the enquiry process was the higher incidence of White British shoppers receiving a response to their initial email enquiry, a trend observed only in the phase one locations. Sixty per cent of White British shoppers received an email response to their enquiry in the phase one locations, compared with forty per cent of BME shoppers.
- At an overall level it was generally the case that once the shoppers had progressed past the initial enquiry stage, a higher volume of information was requested from the BME shoppers across the two locations. This was in terms of both the number of questions asked and the amount of documentation requested. Questions included being asked about the type of property they were looking for, their budget, their potential move-in dates, their employment status and documents establishing their identity, address or residence status.
- There were, however, some notable exceptions, with instances of differences present between the BME shoppers and White British shoppers in the phase one locations, which were not observed in the comparator locations. Specifically, it was found that:
 - 20 per cent of BME shoppers in the phase one locations were asked if they would be able to provide references, compared with just 7 per cent of White British shoppers in the same areas;
 - in the phase one locations, just 1 per cent of White British shoppers were asked about how long they had lived in the local area, compared with 11 per cent of BME shoppers.
- A relatively low proportion of shoppers were asked about their nationality both across shopper types and locations, although BME shoppers were marginally more likely to be asked this question, with eight per cent asked in the comparator locations and seven per cent asked in the phase one locations.
- Similarly, very few shoppers were asked about their leave to remain in the UK, with around one in ten (10%) BME shoppers in both the comparator and phase one locations and no White British shoppers in either location asked about this.
- Of those who were asked about their nationality or residency status, letting agents/landlords were likely to reference new rules that had been introduced as reasons for this. Although this was more common in the phase one locations, there were some isolated incidents of pre-emptive requests for this information in areas where the Right to Rent scheme has not yet been introduced.
- Specific named mentions of the Right to Rent scheme were relatively infrequent and only occurred in the phase one locations, where just nine per cent of BME shoppers recalled this being referenced.

- As shoppers progressed to the latter stages of the enquiry process, further differences between the two shopper groups in the phase one locations emerged that were not evident in the comparator locations. Whilst 53 per cent of BME shoppers were offered the opportunity to view a property in the phase one locations, just 33 per cent of White British shoppers were given this option.
- However, for those who were not given the opportunity to view a property initially, White British shoppers were almost twice as likely to be told that suitable properties would be available in the future (34% White British compared with 18% BME). This pattern was not replicated in the comparator locations, where 20 to 25 per cent of both shopper types were informed this would be the case.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the report

The Right to Rent scheme was introduced as part of the Immigration Act 2014. One concern raised about the scheme was that it might lead to direct or indirect discrimination by landlords and agents, primarily on the grounds of race. This concern linked to the possibility that some landlords and agents might feel that it was more difficult or time-consuming to check the right to rent of non-UK nationals (or those they perceived as not being UK nationals), and therefore be less likely to offer tenancies to them. The Home Office therefore wanted to examine whether the Right to Rent scheme might result in increased levels of unlawful racial discrimination in the housing market. To test this, a mystery shopping exercise, based around typical rental searches, was undertaken. The aim was to compare the experience of individuals of different ethnicities and legitimate immigration statuses when making a rental property enquiry, to identify whether there was any discrimination attributable to the introduction of the Right to Rent scheme.

Given that past research has identified various forms of discrimination in the UK housing market, it was important to have some insight into whether any discrimination identified could be linked with the Right to Rent scheme. For this reason, the mystery shopping activity was undertaken in a comparator location, as well as in the phase one area, that comprises the area covered by the local authorities of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. This report contains both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this mystery shopping exercise, drawing out any differences in experience between the two groups of mystery shoppers – White British compared with Black and minority ethnic (BME) shoppers – in the phase one and comparator locations, when engaging with landlords and letting agents.

A broader evaluation of the Right to Rent scheme was conducted covering the first six months of the policy's implementation; this research is a part of this evaluation. The broader evaluation assessed the impact of the Right to Rent scheme in the phase one area, in terms of:

- immigration enforcement outcomes;
- compliance burden on landlords and agents;
- impact on the housing market; and
- effects on tenants.

In addition, there was an evaluation of processes, which will specifically report on the delivery of the scheme. The mystery shopping exercise on which this report is based was primarily focused on identifying if there is specific discrimination as a result of the scheme. The findings from the mystery shopping exercise have been presented in full within this report and have been incorporated into the overall report on the evaluation of the Right to Rent scheme, contributing to and informing its conclusions.

1.2 Right to Rent scheme

The Right to Rent scheme was introduced as part of the Immigration Act 2014. As a result

landlords of private rental accommodation¹ are required to conduct checks to establish that new² tenants have the right to rent in the UK. Landlords who rent to illegal migrants without having conducted these checks will be liable to civil penalty action.

The Right to Rent scheme aims to:

- make it more difficult for illegally resident individuals to gain access to privately rented accommodation, and so deter those who are illegally resident from remaining in the UK;
- deter those who seek to exploit illegal residents by providing illegal and unsafe accommodation, and increase actions against them;
- deter individuals from attempting to enter the UK illegally, and undermine the market for those who seek to facilitate illegal migration or to traffic migrant workers.

The scheme's implementation is being supported in a number of ways including:

- a helpline, and online tool³ for verifying if a property in the phase one area or the prospective tenant has a right to rent;
- a case checking service for status verification; and
- a 'code of practice'⁴ on illegal immigrants and private rented accommodation and the civil penalty schemes for landlords and agents.

The Government gave a public commitment to a phased implementation of the scheme, and phase one started on 1 December 2014.

1.3 Method

A total of 332 individual mystery shopping assessments were divided equally between phase one 'Right to Rent' test and 'control' comparator locations.

The phase one research locations consisted of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton in the West Midlands, whilst the two selected comparator locations were Coventry and Stoke on Trent. The two comparator locations were carefully selected in partnership with Home Office Science to provide a reliable counterpoint to the phase one local authority areas. Considerations included local area social demography, rental sector housing stock profile and tenant demand. A further logistical consideration was the requirement for the same 'pairs' of mystery shoppers to be involved in both the phase one and comparator assessments, which increased research consistency and minimised the potential drop out of shoppers due to the need to travel long distances.

¹ For information on exclusions please see section 3.7 at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/365711/landlords_code_of_practice.pdf

² The 'Right to Rent' checks will only apply to new tenancy agreements. Existing tenancy agreements are unaffected and landlords will not be required to carry out retrospective checks. The requirements apply to all adults (aged 18 and over) living at the property.

³ See 'Right to Rent' at: <https://eforms.homeoffice.gov.uk/outreach/lcs-application.ofml>

⁴ See Code of Practice at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368622/draft_code_of_practice_on_illegal_immigrants_and_private_rented_accommodation.pdf

In total 204 assessments were conducted with letting agents (national chains, local chains and independents) and 128 with private landlords. Letting agents were selected on a random basis (from offline and online research) based on their local presence and any group specialism (e.g. students). Private landlords were identified through informal advertising in each of the phase one and comparator locations, e.g. local press adverts or cards in the windows of local stores.

The assessments were a blend of face-to-face, telephone and email enquiries. Fieldwork was delivered by highly trained and experienced mystery shoppers selected from ESA Retail's panel of 15,000 shoppers in the UK (ESA Retail are part of the BDRG Group). The profile information held on ESA Retail's mystery shoppers allowed the researchers to use shoppers meeting the qualifying criteria for the both the 'core' and 'control' assessments on the basis of their ethnicity (including accent and ethnic origins) as well as allocating shoppers who were situated within a reasonable distance of the phase one local authorities and comparator locations included within the scope of the programme.

This comparative participation observation methodology compares the experiences of mystery shoppers who are similar except for their apparent ethnicity/nationality. A 'paired' research approach was used in all mystery shopping assessments in the phase one and comparator areas. The differences between the experiences of shopper A (White British) and shopper B (BME) in the comparator location The comparison of experiences between the phase one and comparator locations forms the basis of identifying the effects of the Right to Rent scheme.

The carefully recruited 'pairs' of mystery shoppers visited/approached the same agents and landlords in both the phase one and comparator locations. Each pair of shoppers was allocated a specific tenant enquiry scenario to follow, to ensure that the enquiries would be comparable. The scenarios were carefully designed to reflect fully the initial stages of a rental enquiry from initial contact, through registration and property search, to any follow-up activity. This research design allowed the researchers to elicit and identify potential discrimination at all points in the tenant journey from administrative burden through to post-enquiry contact.

It should be noted that statistical significance testing was not conducted on the data due to the relatively modest number of individual mystery shops completed at a sub-group level.

Mystery shopping scenarios

The researchers developed three renter scenarios to provide a range of experiences with which to test the possibility of discrimination arising as a result of the right to rent scheme. These were developed from concerns raised at the early stages of the policy's development and feedback from early fieldwork in the evaluation. They focused on areas where external stakeholders felt the possibility of discrimination might most readily occur. The scenarios are described below.

1. Student – time-limited right to rent and specific housing market focus. This scenario provided both a test of whether ethnicity might be a factor and whether the time-limited nature of these persons' right to rent might discourage landlords or agents from renting.

2. Older person (UK national with permanent right to rent) with limited documentation – British citizens of different ethnicities who have limited documentation. This was to examine whether there were different experiences based purely on the ethnicity of the individual and whether the administrative burden of checking alternative documentation may provide barriers to rental market access.

3. Parent on low income – non-UK national but with permanent right to rent, a single parent on a low income and living with relatives. This provided an opportunity to examine if there was a differential experience that was specific to those in more vulnerable economic or previous residence history.

Full details of these scenarios along with the full assessment template/questionnaire and sample frame and can be found in the appendix 4 of this report.

Table 1: Mystery shopping profiles by scenario

Mystery Shopping Profiles	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Accent	Location
Scenario 1: Student with visa (giving time-limited right to rent) looking for a shared property with friends					
Mystery shopper 1	Male or female	18–22	White	British accent	West Midlands
Mystery shopper 2	Male or female	18–22	Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, East Asian	Accent typical of the country of origin	West Midlands
Scenario 2: An older male divorcee with limited documentation (no photo identification) but has permanent right to rent					
Mystery shopper 3	Male	55+	White	British accent	West Midlands
Mystery shopper 4	Male	55+	Black African, Black Caribbean, Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, Asian Bangladeshi	Accent typical of the country of origin	West Midlands
Scenario 3: Low income single parent family, vulnerably housed but with permanent right to rent					
Mystery shopper 5	Female	25–35	White	British accent	West Midlands
Mystery shopper 6	Female	25–35	Black Caribbean, Black African	Accent typical of the country of origin	West Midlands

1.4 Structure of the report

This report is structured to mirror the mystery shopper's journey following a typical tenant enquiry scenario. It is divided into five broad sections, each of which includes comparisons in those experiences across location (comparator and phase one), shopper group and enquiry scenario.

Section 2.1 examines the initial experience of contacting and potentially registering with a letting agent or landlord. Section 2.2 reports on the extent to which shoppers were asked about their specific property requirements and also for other information that might impact on their ability to rent a specific property. The next part of the report, Section 2.3, summarises the shopper's experience linked to issues of ethnicity, residency status and supporting documentation. Section 2.4 assesses whether mystery shoppers were offered properties and if this was not possible, the manner in which the issue was handled by the letting agent or landlord. The final section, Section 2.5, assesses the incidence and nature of any follow-up activity by landlords and letting agents.

The Appendix contains copies of the mystery shopping assessment/questionnaire template, the sampling frame and the three mystery shopping scenarios enacted.

2. Detailed Findings

The research was designed to accurately replicate the initial stages of a typical tenant journey (initial contact, property requirements and eligibility screening, follow-up activity) when searching for a new rental property, either directly with a private landlord or through a letting agent.

A comparative participation observation methodology was used to compare the experience of mystery shoppers who were similar except for their apparent ethnicity/nationality. The comparison of experience between the phase one and comparator locations was designed to identify whether there were any differences in experience as a result of a shopper's ethnicity, that could be attributed to a policy effect of the Right to Rent scheme.

Although no two renters' experience will ever be precisely the same, there are certain engagements, in linear chronology, that are very likely to occur. The shopper's experiences at each stage of this process are described in the following section of the report.

2.1 Initial contact and registering with agents

All mystery shoppers were required to initiate contact with a specified letting agent/landlord via a designated channel (telephone, email or face-to-face). Once this contact had been initiated, shoppers were required to present the details of the scenario they had been assigned, although the onus was on the agent/landlord to progress the conversation as would be the case in 'real life'. This first section of the mystery shopper's assessment script or questionnaire collected observations around how the initial contact was received and managed by the letting agent/landlord, and the extent to which it progressed beyond this first shopper-initiated contact.

Section summary: Initial contact and registering with agents

It was typically the case in both the comparator and phase one locations, that Black and minority ethnic (BME) shoppers reported a more positive initial encounter in terms of the manner of the staff member they dealt with and the outcome of this first contact, whether it was being registered with the agent or being placed on a mailing list.

The exception to this was the proportion of shoppers who received a response to their email enquiry. Although in the comparator locations the proportion who received a response to their email enquiry was similar for both shopper groups (43%, 13 out of 30 White British; 47%, 14 out of 30 BME), the phase one locations recorded a higher proportion of White British shoppers receiving a prompt response (60%, 18 out of 30), compared with their BME counterparts (40%, 12 out of 30).

Initial contact by phone

It should be noted that BME shoppers were selected to have accents typical of their country of ethnic origin and so agents/landlords should have been able to identify this group as non-native British when receiving enquiries by phone.

In the comparator locations, where shoppers made contact by phone, White British shoppers were more likely than BME shoppers to have their call transferred to another member of staff. Whilst BME shoppers were almost all dealt with by the person who answered the phone (95%, 38 out of 40), this was only the case for 83 per cent (33 out of 40) of White British shoppers in the comparator locations. However, this difference was not replicated in the phase one Right to Rent locations where 93 per cent (37 out of 40) of BME shoppers and 90 per cent (36 out of 40) of White British shoppers had their enquiry handled by the initial telephone contact. This could be interpreted in two conflicting ways:

- that the initial member of staff was unwilling to assist and wanted to make the process more laborious for the shopper; or
- that the initial member of staff wanted to pass the shopper on to someone who was more qualified to handle their enquiry.

Given the increased level of interaction between BME shoppers and agents/landlords evidenced later in the report, the latter of these two possible explanations seems more plausible.

In addition, White British shoppers were less likely than BME shoppers to have their enquiry handled during the course of this first phone call in the comparator locations. Whilst 93 per cent (37 out of 40) of BME shoppers had their enquiry dealt with there and then on the phone call, this was only the case for 80 per cent (32 out of 40) of White British shoppers. Although marginally less pronounced, this difference was also observed in the phase one locations, where 90 per cent (36 out of 40) of BME shoppers had their enquiry handled on the original phone call, compared with 83 per cent (33 out of 40) of White British shoppers. Consequently, in both the comparator and phase one locations, White British shoppers were more likely than their BME counterparts to be told to either phone back at another time or told that the agent would call them back. The reason for this difference is unclear.

Initial contact by email

Shoppers undertaking email assessments used their own names to compete the enquiries and as such, this would have acted as an indicator to landlords/agents as to the ethnicity of the mystery shopper and allowed the research to test whether the name of the shopper had any impact on their experience.

In the comparator locations, a similarly low proportion of both White British and BME shoppers received a response to their email enquiry within two working days (43%, 13 out of 30 White British compared with 47%, 14 out of 30 BME). In comparison, a greater difference in experience emerged for those initiating contact via email in the phase one locations. Here 60 per cent (18 out of 30) of White British shoppers received a prompt response to their email, whilst BME shoppers were more in-line with shoppers in the comparator locations, with just 40 per cent (12 out of 30) receiving a response to their email within two working days.

For shoppers who did not receive a response to their initial email enquiry, it was typically the case that there was also no response to a second email sent to the letting agent/landlord. This was observed in both the comparator and phase one locations, indicating that in general, email is a much less responsive channel for seeking rental property information than telephone or face-to-face. In the phase one locations 33 per cent of both White British and BME shoppers (4 out of 12 and 6 out of 18 respectively) received a response to a second email. In the comparator locations, 35 per cent (6 out of 17) White British shoppers received an email compared with 44 per cent (7 out of 16) BME shoppers.

Initial face-to face-contact

As there was no engagement required to establish contact prior to face-to-face encounters, assessment of the experience of shoppers undertaking this element of the research begins in the following agents'/landlords' manner section of the report. These face-to-face contacts assessed the impact of the physical appearance (ethnicity) of the shopper on their lettings enquiry experience.

Agents'/landlords' manner

Ability to provide assistance was relatively high in the comparator locations, with agents/landlords informing 77 per cent (49 out of 64) of White British shoppers and 76 per cent (55 out of 72) of BME shoppers that they could help them with their enquiry. In the phase one locations a marginal difference was observed, with 80 per cent (56 out of 70) of BME shoppers being told that the agent/landlord would be able to assist them with their property search, compared with a lower 70 per cent (49 out of 70) of White British shoppers.

With regards to the person who handled the enquiry, BME shoppers in the comparator locations were more likely to use positive terms to describe the person they dealt with. More than half (60%, 43 out of 72) of BME shoppers described the agent/landlord they liaised with as 'helpful' and 43 per cent (31 out of 72) deemed them 'attentive', compared with just 52 per cent (33 out of 64) of White British shoppers claiming that the person they dealt with was 'helpful' and just 17 per cent (11 out of 64) believing them to be 'attentive'.

A similar pattern emerged in the phase one locations, with BME shoppers again describing the manner of the person they dealt with more positively. In the phase one locations 60 per cent (42 out of 70) of BME shoppers reported that the agent/landlord was 'helpful', compared with just 46 per cent (32 out of 70) of White British shoppers who deemed this to be the case. A smaller proportion (37%, 26 out of 70) of BME shoppers and only 26 per cent (18 out of 70) of White British shoppers found the agent/landlord to be 'attentive'. In addition, White British shoppers in the phase one locations were substantially more likely to describe the manner of the person they dealt with as 'vague', with 21 per cent (15 out of 17) reporting this to be the case as opposed to only 7 per cent (5 out of 70) of BME shoppers.

Registration

There was a notable difference in the proportion of White British and BME shoppers offered the opportunity to register with the letting agents in the comparator locations, with the latter much more likely to be asked if they wanted to do this. Whilst 21 per cent (15 out of 72) of BME shoppers were given the option to register, just 9 per cent (6 out of 64) of White British shoppers were given this option. A similar, but less pronounced trend was observed in the phase one locations, with 21 per cent (15 out of 70) of BME shoppers and 14 per cent (10 out of 70) of White British shoppers being asked if they wanted to register with the letting agent.

For those shoppers who were offered the option of registering with the agent in the comparator locations, a similar proportion of both shopper types had associated fees mentioned to them, with 3 out of 6 (50%) White British and 9 out of 15 (60%) BME shoppers being informed of the fees they would need to pay. In the phase one locations, there was a much bigger difference between the two shopper groups, with 0 out of 10 (0%) White British shoppers being informed about fees, compared with 10 out of 15 (66%) BME shoppers who had this information relayed to them.

Fees mentioned tended to relate to more general charges that would need to be paid if the enquirer got to the stage of actually renting a property, these are explored in more depth in Section 2.3 of this report. That said, there were five shoppers who were informed there would be a fee for registering. These shoppers were all from Scenario 2 or 3, and two shoppers were White British and three were BME.

In addition to being less likely to be asked whether they wanted to register with the agent, White British shoppers in the comparator locations were also much less likely to be offered the opportunity to be placed on a mailing list. Indeed, just 5 per cent (3 out of 64) of White British shoppers were asked if they would like to be added to the agent's mailing list in the comparator locations, compared with 18 per cent (13 out of 72) of BME shoppers. These percentages were higher for each respective group in the phase one locations, although the differences between the two shopper types remained. Only 11 per cent (8 out of 70) of White British shoppers were given the option to be placed on a mailing list in the phase one locations, this rose to 27 per cent (19 out of 70) for BME shoppers.

2.2 Rents and access to the market

This section of the questionnaire looked to assess the next stage of the shopper journey, encompassing whether the agent/landlord asked the shopper for further specific details about their requirements, which would help them to establish the availability of suitable properties for the enquirer.

Section summary: Rents and access to the market

A greater volume of information was sought from BME shoppers compared with White British shoppers in both the comparator and phase one locations. This included a higher proportion being asked about the type of property they were looking for, what their rental budget was, their potential move-in dates and how long they intended to stay in the property.

In addition to the information that would help the letting agent/landlord search for appropriate properties, BME shoppers were also more likely to be asked for information that would ensure any application would be able to progress. In particular, in the phase one locations, a larger proportion of BME shoppers were asked if they would be able to provide references, whether they had a guarantor and also about their employment status.

These differences could be interpreted in one of two ways:

- that the landlord/agent is demonstrating a greater interest in the potential renter and is asking additional questions in order to elicit information that would allow the enquiry to progress more speedily;
- that there are more 'hurdles' being put in the path of the potential renter in order to deter the applicant from proceeding further.

As these are questions that would ultimately need to be asked of all potential tenants before a property is rented, it seems likely that rather than being discriminatory, these questions are being asked earlier in the rental property search process for BME shoppers in order to ascertain eligibility. This resulted in a higher proportion being given the option to be put on a mailing list or being told that there were suitable properties available.

Rents and access to the market

A relatively low proportion of shoppers were asked about their nationality, both across shopper types and locations. Although still proportionately low, BME shoppers were slightly more likely than White British shoppers to be asked about their nationality, in both the comparator and phase one locations.

In addition to the higher proportion of BME shoppers who were offered either to be placed on a mailing list or to register with the letting agent, the level of detail requested from this group of shoppers was typically higher than those posing as White British shoppers. This included being asked for a higher volume of information that would enable the letting agent/landlord to assist them in their search and in most cases was evident in both the phase one and comparator locations.

The following key differences emerged.

- Half (50%, 36 out of 72) of the BME shoppers in the comparator locations were asked by letting agents what type of property they were looking to rent, compared with just 38 per cent (24 out of 64) of White British shoppers. Similarly, in the phase one Right to Rent locations, 51 per cent (36 out of 70) of BME shoppers compared with 40 per cent (28 out of 70) of White British shoppers were asked about their rental property preferences.
- Half (50%, 36 out of 72) of the BME shoppers in the comparator locations were asked about their rental budget, compared with just 20 per cent (13 out of 64) of White British shoppers. This pattern was replicated in the phase one locations, although to a lesser extent, with 43 per cent (30 out of 70) of BME shoppers asked about their budget compared with 31 per cent (22 out of 70) of White British shoppers.
- A difference in the proportion of shoppers who were asked about their intended tenancy duration in the comparator locations, with less than one in ten (9%, 6 out of 64) of the White British shoppers asked this, compared with one in four (25%, 18 out of 72) of the BME shoppers. The variation between the two shopper groups was also evident in the phase one locations, where ten per cent (7 out of 70) of those posing as White British shoppers were asked about the length of time they intended to stay in the property, half the proportion of BME shoppers who were asked for this information (20%, 14 out of 70).
- A lower level of agent/landlord enquiries about the potential move-in dates of White British shoppers in the comparator locations, with only 17 per cent (11 out of 64) of this shopper group being asked about their ideal date for moving in, compared with 39 per cent (28 out of 72) of BME. Once again, a difference, albeit slightly less pronounced, was also evident in the phase one locations, with 20 per cent (14 out of 70) of White British shoppers and 33 per cent (23 out of 70) of BME shoppers being asked when they were looking to move into a property.

In addition, there were a number of differences in the proportion of shoppers asked certain questions about the property search, based on shopper ethnicity and also between the phase one and comparator locations. These differences are outlined in the below tables.

Table 2: Questions asked by letting agents in the phase one and comparator locations by ethnicity of shopper

Questions asked	Comparator locations		Phase one locations	
	BME (n=42)	White British (n=39)	BME (n=41)	White British (n=42)
Whether would like to register with them	26% (11)	13% (5)	22% (9)	21% (9)
Type of property looking for	52% (22)	46% (18)	51% (21)	48% (20)
Ideal move-in date	36% (15)	15% (6)	39% (16)	26% (11)
Budget	55% (23)	31% (12)	51% (21)	45% (19)
Intended tenancy length	19% (8)	8% (3)	12% (5)	14% (6)

Table 3: Questions asked by informal landlords⁵ in the phase one and comparator locations by ethnicity of shopper

Questions asked	Comparator locations		Phase one locations	
	BME (n=30)	White British (n=25)	BME (n=29)	White British (n=28)
Whether would like to register with them	13% (4)	4% (1)	21% (6)	7% (2)
Type of property looking for	47% (14)	24% (6)	52% (15)	32% (9)
Ideal move-in date	43% (13)	20% (5)	24% (7)	18% (5)
Budget	43% (13)	4% (1)	31% (9)	14% (4)
Intended tenancy length	33% (10)	12% (3)	31% (9)	4% (1)

⁵ An informal landlord is a landlord who is not using a formal letting agent or property management service to advertise and let their property.

As well as the differences outlined above, indicatively, BME shoppers in Scenario 2 in the phase one locations were more likely to be asked these generic rental questions, although many of these questions were also more likely to be asked of BME, Scenario 2 shoppers in the comparator locations.

Where the typical rent that the shopper could expect to pay was discussed there were no observable differences, in terms of the amount they were advised they would be looking at, between the mystery shopper pairs in either the phase one or comparator locations.

Qualifying questions

In addition to differences in the number and types of questions asked by agents/landlords that could be seen as aiding the property search process, there were also differences in the incidence of questions being asked that could determine a shopper's ability to rent, including the following.

- A difference in questions around guarantors in the phase one locations, with only 4 per cent (3 out of 70) of White British shoppers being asked if they had a guarantor, compared with 14 per cent (10 out of 70) of BME shoppers. In the comparator locations, a similarly low proportion of both White British and BME shoppers were asked whether they had a guarantor by the letting agent/landlord (5%, 3 out of 64; 10%, 7 out of 72 respectively).
- A higher proportion of BME shoppers were asked if they would be able to provide references in the phase one locations (20%, 14 out of 70 BME; 7%, 5 out of 70 White British). This was not replicated in the comparator locations where 20 per cent (13 out of 64) of White British shoppers and 19 per cent (14 out of 72) of BME shoppers were asked if they had any references.
- Half as many White British shoppers were asked about their employment status compared with BME shoppers in the comparator locations (19%, 12 out of 64 White British; 38%, 27 out of 72 BME). This difference was even greater in the phase one locations where 16 per cent (11 out of 70) of White British shoppers were asked about their employment status compared with 43 per cent (30 out of 70) of BME shoppers.

Indicatively, BME shoppers enacting Scenario 2⁶ in the phase one locations were much more likely than all other shoppers in these locations to be asked if they would be able to provide references and to be asked about their employment status. This was a trend also observed in the comparator locations, although to a lesser extent and only in the proportion of shoppers asked about their employment status. A difference was also evident between BME shoppers enacting Scenario 3⁷ in the comparator locations, with the former more likely to be asked about their employment status.

In addition, in the phase one locations both informal landlords (a landlord who is not using a letting agent to manage the property) and letting agents were more likely to question BME shoppers about their employment than White British shoppers; 42 per cent (17 out of 41) of agents and 45 per cent (13 out of 29) of informal landlords asked this question of BME shoppers, whilst only 14 per cent (6 out of 42) of agents and 18 per cent (5 out of 28) of informal landlords asked the same question of White British shoppers. This was a trend replicated in the

⁶ Scenario 2 was an older male divorcee with only some of the documents necessary but with a permanent right to rent.

⁷ Scenario 3 was a vulnerably housed female on low income but with permanent right to rent.

comparator locations with 15 per cent (6 out of 39) of White British compared with 26 per cent (11 out of 42) of BME shoppers being asked their employment status by agents, and 24 per cent (6 out of 25) of White British compared with 53 per cent (16 out of 30) of BME shoppers being asked this by informal landlords.

A higher proportion of BME than White British shoppers were asked if they could provide references by informal landlords in the phase one locations; 35 per cent (10 out of 29) of BME shoppers were asked this by informal landlords compared with just 14 per cent (4 out of 28) of White British shoppers. Agents in the phase one locations were less likely to ask this with ten per cent (4 out of 41) of BME shoppers and two per cent (1 out of 42) of White British shoppers receiving this request. In the comparator locations there was little difference between the two shopper types, with 23 per cent (7 out of 30) of BME shoppers asked to provide references, compared with 28 per cent (7 out of 25) of White British shoppers. In addition, a similar proportion of both BME shoppers and White British shoppers were asked by agents to provide references (17%, 7 out of 42 BME; 15%, 6 out of 39 White British).

There was no difference in the likelihood of a shopper being asked how long they had lived in the area where they were looking to rent a property in the comparator locations (6%, 4 out of 64 White British; 7%, 5 out of 72 BME). However, a difference was apparent in the phase one locations where only 1 per cent (1 out of 70) of White British shoppers were asked how long they had lived in the local area, compared with 11 per cent (8 out of 70) of BME shoppers. Where this was asked, the majority of agents/landlords informed shoppers that it was to understand their preferences for areas within each location. However, there were a few other reasons that received isolated mentions:

“The landlord said that if I had lived in the area before, I might have gone with the Home Office procedures before which would make it easier.” (Phase one, Asian, landlord – newspaper, Scenario 2, telephone)

As the difference between White British and BME shoppers in the phase one locations was relatively modest, it is unlikely that this is evidence of discrimination. If anything, the agent could be trying to minimise the effort required by BME shoppers by ascertaining whether they have previously gone through the process of proving their right to rent.

In addition, there was also a small difference in the propensity of agents/landlords to ask about shopper nationality, although this was at relatively low levels across all shopper groups. None of those who saw an agent face-to-face were asked about their nationality in either the phase one or comparator locations. In the comparator locations, two per cent (1 out of 64) of White British shoppers were asked about their nationality, compared with eight per cent (6 out of 72) of BME shoppers, with figures in the phase one locations similarly low, with no White British shoppers and only seven per cent (5 out of 70) of BME shoppers asked to confirm their nationality. Of those who were asked, most shoppers were informed that this was because of new rules that had been introduced, meaning that landlords/agents now had to check this information, or it was a question included on a form that shoppers were asked to complete in order to register. It was more common for those in the phase one locations to be told that this was a legal requirement, although a few landlords/agents in the comparator locations also stated that they were required to complete checks:

“The landlord said he did not like renting to people who were from outside the UK if he had to do checks on them, because it was more trouble than it was worth.” (Comparator, Asian, landlord – card advert, Scenario 2, telephone)

“I was asked about my nationality as I was told that they had to ask this under new rules that made it the responsibility of the landlord to check the person had the right to be in the UK.” (Phase one, Asian, landlord – newspaper, Scenario 2, telephone)

“The agent said that since 2014 they had to check if a person had a right to be in the country under new government rules.” (Phase one, Asian, independent agent, Scenario 2, telephone)

2.3 Residency status questions and documentation

This section of the report analyses the mystery shopper’s experience around questions of their residency status/right to remain in the UK.

Section summary: Residency status questions and documentation

In summary, around one in ten (7 out of 70 in the phase one location and 5 out of 72 in the comparator location) BME shoppers were asked about their residency status, with little variation by location. No White British shoppers were asked the same question(s). In phase one locations, BME shoppers were twice as likely as White British shoppers to report being asked additional questions (34%, 24 out of 70; 17%, 12 out of 70 respectively) by landlords or agents. However, these were typically generic rental questions such as whether the shopper smoked, whether they had pets and also questions about their property preferences. In the phase one locations, BME shoppers were more likely to be asked to provide at least one piece of documentation with 30 per cent (21 out of 70) being asked compared with 23 per cent (16 out of 70) of White British shoppers. In both locations, BME shoppers were more likely to be asked for proof of the right to rent although, overall, only around one in ten (8 out of 70 in the phase one location and 7 out of 72 in the comparator location) were subject to this request. However, although BME shoppers in the phase one locations were more likely to be asked additional questions and/or to provide some form of documentation, this did translate to a higher proportion than being told that there were suitable properties available and/or being placed on a mailing list.

Residency status questions and documentation

Across the comparator areas, seven per cent (5 out of 72) of BME shoppers were asked about their residency status or right to remain in the UK, whilst no White British shoppers were asked this. In the phase one Right to Rent areas, ten per cent (7 out of 70) of BME shoppers were asked about their residency status. Again no White British shoppers were asked this. Although only based on a small sample size, indicatively, informal landlords were more likely to ask about the shopper’s residency status than letting agents.

In addition, BME shoppers enacting Scenario 2 were the only people asked about their nationality and about their right to reside in the UK in the phase one locations. This was largely replicated in the comparator locations, although a small minority of BME shoppers enacting Scenario 3 were also asked about their nationality and right to reside in these locations.

Reasons given for asking about the residency status of the shopper centred almost universally on the new rules that had been introduced that meant landlords were obliged to check. Although this was more common in the phase one locations, there were already some isolated incidents of the policy spreading to locations not included in the Right to Rent areas during the period of the fieldwork in May 2015:

“I was told that they did not yet have to check this formally, but some of the better landlords asked them to do this because they wanted to ensure that when the rules came in, they would have complied with them.” (Comparator – Coventry, Asian, independent agent, Scenario 2, telephone)

In the comparator locations 29 per cent (21 out of 72) of BME enquirers were asked to provide at least one piece of documentation or other proof of their status/right to remain in the UK, compared with 31 per cent (20 out of 64) of White British enquirers. The situation around requests for residency evidence was slightly different in the phase one areas where, overall, 30 per cent (21 out of 70) of BME shoppers were asked for at least one piece of documentation compared with 23 per cent (16 out of 70) of White British.

The profile of documentation requests differed by location and shopper ethnicity, see Table 4.

Table 4: Documents requested by landlords and agents in phase one and comparator locations by ethnicity of shopper

Documentation requested	Comparator locations		Phase one locations	
	BME (n=72)	White British (n=64)	BME (n=70)	White British (n=70)
Proof of address	13% (9)	11% (7)	10% (7)	7% (5)
Proof of right to reside in the UK	10% (7)	2% (1)	11% (8)	1% (1)
Proof of employment	3% (2)	19% (12)	9% (6)	11% (8)
Proof of income	18% (13)	9% (6)	16% (11)	10% (7)
Any other documents	15% (11)	28% (18)	16% (11)	19% (13)
None requested	71% (51)	69% (44)	70% (49)	77% (54)

In both locations, BME shoppers were more likely to be asked for proof of right to reside in the UK, although overall, only around one in ten (8 out of 70 in the phase one location and 7 out of 72 in the comparator location) were asked for this.

Directionally, shoppers enacting Scenario 2⁸ in the comparator locations were more likely to be asked to provide documentation, compared with those posing as Scenario 1 or 3 shoppers, regardless of their ethnicity. However, in the phase one locations, only BME shoppers enacting Scenario 2 were notably more likely to be asked to provide some form of documentation, both than White British shoppers also following Scenario 2, and all shoppers in the other two Scenarios.

Differences were also observed in the number and types of documentation requested by agents compared with informal landlords in the phase one and comparator locations. Informal landlords were more likely to ask for documentation than agents, across both locations. Specifically, differences that emerged are shown in Table 5 and 6.

⁸ Scenario 2 was an older male divorcee with only some of the documents necessary but with full right to rent.

Table 5: Documents requested by letting agents in phase one and comparator locations by ethnicity of shopper

Documentation requested	Comparator locations		Phase one locations	
	BME (n=42)	White British (n=39)	BME (n=41)	White British (n=42)
Proof of address	12% (5)	10% (4)	5% (2)	2% (1)
Proof of right to reside in the UK	5% (2)	0% (0)	10% (4)	0% (0)
Proof of employment	2% (1)	8% (3)	7% (3)	5% (2)
Proof of income	12% (5)	5% (2)	12% (5)	2% (1)
Any other documents	10% (4)	15% (6)	10% (4)	12% (5)
None requested	83% (35)	82% (32)	78% (32)	86% (36)

Table 6: Documents requested by informal landlords in phase one and comparator location by ethnicity of shopper

Documentation requested	Comparator locations		Phase one locations	
	BME (n=30)	White British (n=25)	BME (n=29)	White British (n=28)
Proof of address	13% (4)	12% (3)	17% (5)	14% (4)
Proof of right to reside in the UK	17% (5)	4% (1)	14% (4)	0% (0)
Proof of employment	3% (1)	36% (9)	10% (3)	21% (6)
Proof of income	27% (8)	16% (4)	21% (6)	21% (6)
Any other documents	23% (7)	48% (12)	24% (7)	25% (7)
None requested	53% (16)	48% (12)	59% (17)	68% (19)

The vast majority of landlords/agents recognised the documents offered by the mystery Evaluation of the Right to Rent scheme

shoppers. In the comparator locations, this was the case for 86 per cent (18 out of 21) of BME shoppers and 95 per cent (19 out of 20) of White British shoppers. In the phase one locations, 88 per cent (14 out of 16) of White British shoppers who were asked to supply documentary evidence reported that their papers were recognised, whereas this figure fell to 67 per cent (14 out of 21) for BME shoppers. For the 33 per cent (7 out of 21) of respondents where this was not the case, respondents were unsure whether their documents were recognised.

For shoppers asked to provide documentary evidence in the comparator locations, 24 per cent (5 out of 21) of BME shoppers reported that the landlord/agent requested or suggested alternative or additional documentation to those that the shopper said they would be able to provide, compared with 30 per cent (6 out of 20) of White British shoppers in these areas. The request for alternative documentation, over and above what the shopper had said that they could provide, increased to 38 per cent (8 out of 21) for BME shoppers in the phase one locations compared with 25 per cent (4 out of 16) for White British shoppers.

For those who were requested to supply documentation over and above those outlined above, the most common additional documentation requested was some form of photo ID, be that a passport or driving licence. For those who said that they were unable to provide the necessary photo ID, most were told that a birth certificate would be a suitable alternative. A very small minority, however, were informed that the absence of these documents meant that they would not be able to rent a property with that agent at all:

“The agent insisted that I needed a photo ID document such as a passport or driving licence. Without a photo ID document, the agent said that he could not rent me the flat.”
(Comparator, Asian, landlord – online, Scenario 2)

A small number of comments indicated that shoppers were also informed that a credit check would be run prior to them being able to rent the property. For most, however, documentation was either not discussed or the shopper was informed that documents would only be required once a specific property they wanted to rent had been found.

In the comparator areas, around a quarter of shoppers were advised that there would be additional fees or costs involved in securing a property. There was little variability by shopper group (24%, 17 out of 72 BME; 27%, 17 out of 64 White British). In the phase one areas, the situation reversed and 31 per cent (22 out of 70) BME were advised of potential additional rental costs compared with 19 per cent (13 out of 70) of White British shoppers.

For the minority of shoppers who were told about the fees that they would need to pay in order to secure a property, a number of different charges were mentioned, particularly by agents. Typically called ‘administrative fees’, agents cited charges for:

- credit and reference checking;
- the contract;
- the inventory; and
- guarantor checks.

In addition, shoppers were told that they would need to pay a deposit, often equivalent to one month’s rent, with this being requested similarly by both agents and informal landlords.

In the comparator locations one in four shoppers were asked additional questions, with little variation by ethnicity group (25%, 18 out of 72 BME; 23%, 15 out of 64 White British). In phase one locations, BME shoppers were nearly twice as likely to report being asked additional questions (34%, 24 out of 70 BME; 17%, 12 out of 70 White British).

Those asked additional questions tended to be asked generic rental questions such as whether the shopper smoked, whether they had pets and also questions about their property preferences, e.g. whether they would like the property to be furnished or unfurnished. Other questions asked included how many people the tenancy was for. In addition, shoppers were often asked for their contact details, including name, email address and telephone number, to allow the agent/landlord to keep them informed during their rental property search. Some shoppers were also asked if they would like to view a property(ies) and if so, when they would like to book a viewing.

“The Agent asked me questions about my budget, how many people would like to move in, if I was working and when I would have the funds to move in.” (Phase one, White British, landlord – online, Scenario 3, email)

“I was asked if I would have any pets, which were not allowed, and if I was going to have other people staying in the property.” (Phase one, Asian, independent agent, Scenario 2, telephone)

Overall, however, there was very little difference in the type of additional questions asked between the BME shoppers and White British shoppers in either the comparator or phase one locations. The only exception was that three BME shoppers in the phase one location were asked whether a previous landlord had requested to see their passport or letter from the Home Office; no other shoppers were asked this question.

“I was asked what I had shown the previous landlord because it was a rule in the whole of Birmingham that I had to show the letters with the right to be in the UK to the landlord before getting a tenancy.” (Phase one, Asian, landlord – card advert, Scenario 2, telephone)

Overall, although BME shoppers enacting Scenario 2 in the phase one locations were typically asked for a greater volume of information, this did then convert to a higher proportion of these shoppers being asked if they would like to be placed on a mailing list or being told that there were suitable properties available.

No named mentions of the Right to Rent scheme were made at all in the comparator locations, although some alluded to a new legal requirement that was being introduced requiring landlords to check a tenant’s residency status. Across the phase one area, nine per cent (6 out of 70) of BME shoppers recalled the scheme being mentioned by name (5 out of 6 had it mentioned to them by an informal landlord, 1 by an independent letting agent). Again, none of the White British shoppers recalled any mention of the initiative.

For the six shoppers who did speak to someone who mentioned the Right to Rent scheme specifically, explanations included:

“He said that he had to follow the Right to Rent rules because otherwise he could get into trouble.” (Phase one, Asian, landlord – card advert, Scenario 2, telephone)

“The agent said that since 2014, they had to check if a person had a right to be in the country under new Home Office rules called Right to Rent.” (Phase one, Asian, independent agent, Scenario 2, telephone)

And there was just a single incident where the landlord appeared to discriminate actively against the shopper as a result of the Right to Rent scheme:

“The landlord said that if I was under that scheme he was not going to bother because he had a local person who wanted the property and it was much easier to rent to them. Though this was mentioned, the landlord seemed against me trying to pursue it should I have been able to.” (Phase one, Asian, landlord – card advert, Scenario 2, telephone)

The Right to Rent scheme was only explicitly mentioned by name to six shoppers across the entire mystery shopping programme, with all of those it was mentioned to being BME shoppers enacting Scenario 2, in the phase one locations.

Although there were a small number of mentions of new legislation that had been introduced requiring landlords to check a prospective tenant’s right to stay in the UK, no agents or informal landlords mentioned the Right to Rent scheme by name in the comparator locations. In the phase one locations, however, it was predominantly the informal landlords who mentioned the scheme by name, with 17 per cent (5 out of 29) mentioning it to BME shoppers. In addition, two per cent (1 out of 41) of agents cited the Right to Rent scheme to this shopper group. The scheme was not mentioned to any White British shoppers in the phase one locations by either agents or informal landlords.

There are a number of possible reasons that BME Scenario 2 shoppers in the phase one locations were the only group to have the Right to Rent scheme mentioned to them. The most likely is due to their personal circumstances, being older and not having all the relevant documentation required, and consequently, informal landlords pointing at the legislation to justify any requests for fuller documentation.

2.4 Properties offered

This section of the report assesses the extent to which shoppers in each location were offered properties to view and where that was not possible, the way in which that issue was handled by landlords and letting agents.

Section summary: Properties offered

In both comparator and phase one locations, BME shoppers were more likely than white shoppers to be offered a rental property to view. For those unsuccessful at this stage, the situation becomes more variable across locations, with BME shoppers less likely than White shoppers to be notified of future potential rental properties in the phase one areas. However, because of the higher likelihood of BME shoppers being told that there were available properties or being offered an opportunity to view a rental property, there was very little difference in the actual number of shoppers who were told that there would not be any properties to view in the future, with 66 per cent (31 out of 47) White British shoppers being told this compared with 82 per cent (27 out of 33) BME shoppers.

Properties offered

In the comparator locations, around half of shoppers were offered an opportunity to view a rental property(ies). BME shoppers (51%, 37 out of 72) were marginally more likely to receive a viewing offer than White British shoppers (47%, 30 out of 64). There was a greater disparity in the phase one areas, where BME shoppers were 20 per cent more likely to be offered a property to view (53%, 37 out of 70 BME; 33%, 23 out of 70 White British), potentially as a result of having been through a more rigorous fact finding process with the agent/landlord.

This left around half of BME shoppers without a property to view following their initial enquiry.

Whilst not indicative of the broader findings, there was one BME shopper who reported the following:

“I was told they needed to look at what they had that was suitable for me and they needed to check with the landlords on whether the landlord wanted to do the Right to Rent check because it cost extra.” (Phase one, Asian, independent agent, Scenario 2)

Within this group, broadly a half of respondents did receive a reason why there was no availability from the landlord or letting agent concerned. In the comparator areas, 46 per cent (16 out of 35) of BME shoppers and 47 per cent (16 out of 34) of White British shoppers received an explanation. In the phase one locations, White British shoppers were slightly more likely to receive an explanation around the lack of property availability (55%, 26 out of 47 White British; 49%, 16 out of 33 BME).

In the majority of comparator location instances, when the shopper was told that there were no properties available, this was stated before any other questions had been asked either by the shopper or landlord/agent (56%, 10 out of 18 BME shoppers; 57%, 12 out of 21 White British). In the phase one assessments, BME shoppers were as likely to be told that no properties were available once they had discussed expected rents and/or locations of interest (30%, 6 out of 20) as they were before any other questions had been asked (30%, 6 out of 20). For White British shoppers, two-thirds (63%, 22 out of 35) were told that no properties were available before any other questions were asked.

Most of those who were given a reason why the agent/landlord was unable to offer them a property to consider were told that there were not any suitable properties available at the moment or that the landlord/agent did not cover the area where the shopper was looking to rent a property. For those who enquired about a specific property, shoppers were generally told that it had already been let or that there had been a high level of interest in the property and therefore it was likely to be let before they would have the opportunity to view it. The reasons given by agents/landlords were consistent between both shopper types and also across the comparator and phase one locations.

The vast majority of shoppers who were not offered a property initially were not told that there would be availability in the future. This was the case regardless of location or ethnicity. In the comparator locations, 20 per cent (7 out of 35) of BME shoppers and 24 per cent (8 out of 34) of White British shoppers were told that there might be property available in the future. However, in the phase one test locations, White British shoppers were almost twice as likely (34%, 16 out of 47) to be advised that there would be suitable properties available in the future as BME shoppers (18%, 6 out of 33). However, because a higher proportion of BME shoppers in the phase one locations were initially offered a property to view or originally told that properties were available, there was very little difference in the actual number of shoppers who were told that there would not be any properties to view in the future, with 30 White British shoppers being told this compared with 27 BME shoppers.

2.5 Follow-up contact

The final section of the questionnaire assesses the incidence and nature of any follow-up activity from landlords and letting agents.

Section summary: Follow-up contact

Follow-up contact from letting agents/landlords to rental property enquiries was relatively infrequent, particularly in the phase one locations. Of the minority who did have further

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communications with the letting agent/landlord, around half were offered viewings, although this was lower for BME shoppers in the phase one locations (39 per cent, 5 out of 13). In the comparator locations, BME shoppers were twice as likely as White British shoppers to receive a follow-up contact within two days of their initial enquiry (31%, 22 out of 72 and 16%, 10 out of 64 respectively). In the phase one areas, there was very little (3%) difference in the incidence of follow-up activity where 20 per cent (14 out of 70) of BME shoppers and 17 per cent (12 out of 70) of White British shoppers received a contact.

Follow-up contact

In the vast majority of cases, those with a follow-up contact were advised that the landlord/letting agent would be in a position to assist the applicant in the future. Across the comparator areas only nine per cent (2 out of 22) of BME shoppers and ten per cent (1 out of 10) of White British shoppers were told that they could not be helped and in the phase one locations (caution low sample sizes) no BME applicants and just eight per cent (1 out of 12) of White British were told that they could not be assisted.

Small sample sizes inhibit the ability to draw robust conclusions around subsequent provision of property details, the source of any property details provided and offers of viewings. Directionally, however, the following observations can be made.

- A greater proportion of BME shoppers in the comparator locations were sent property details than White British shoppers.
- Shoppers in the phase one area were more likely to receive property details than those in the comparator areas, with only a marginal difference (3%) between the two groups. In all cases, the vast majority of property details were perceived to have been sent from a member of staff rather than an automated mailing list.
- Around a half of all shoppers in the comparator locations were offered a viewing subsequent to their initial enquiry. There was more variability in the phase one areas where, indicatively, White British shoppers who received follow-up contact were most likely to be offered a post-enquiry viewing. However, it should be noted that a higher proportion of BME shoppers had already been offered the opportunity to view a property at an earlier stage of the enquiry process.
- Very few shoppers in the comparator locations (1%, 2 out of 20 BME shoppers; no White British shoppers) were asked to supply any additional information by a landlord or agent. In phase one areas it was again the only BME shoppers who were asked to provide further information, although this was also at a relatively low level (21%, 3 out of 14). Of those asked to provide additional information, the two BME shoppers in the comparator locations were asked generic questions about their rental search (e.g. property preferences). By comparison, two of the three shoppers contacted for additional information in the phase one locations were asked to bring their passport and/or Home Office letter with them if they attended a viewing. As this is a necessary check agents/landlords need to make before renting a property, it is unlikely that this is discrimination, rather just to ensure that the rental application process could run smoothly.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Final questionnaire

Section 1: Initial contact

#	Question Text	Answer Codes	Comment Requirements	F2F	Tel	Email
Stage 1: Initial Contact						
E1	Did you get a response to your email enquiry within 2 working days?	Yes / No				Y
E2	Did you get a response to your second email enquiry within 2 working days?	Yes / No				Y
E3	How long after your initial email did you get a response?		Enter how many days:			Y
T1	Did the person who answered either deal with your enquiry or pass you on to a colleague to do so?	Deal with Enquiry / Pass me on			Y	
T2	How was the call handled:	Told to call back another time / Told they would call me back another time / Handled my enquiry there and then			Y	
T3	Did you receive a call back within 2 working days?	Yes / No			Y	
F1	How long did it take before you were spoken to?		Enter in minutes:	Y		

Section 2: Registering and finding properties (1)

#	Question Text	Answer Codes	Comment Requirements	F2F	Tel	Email
Stage 2: Registering and Finding Properties						
X1	Did the agent/landlord say that they could help you with your enquiry?	Yes / No	If NO - comment to explain your answer.	Y	Y	Y
X2	Please describe the manner of the person who you spoke to/corresponded with via email?	Encouraging Helpful Friendly Attentive Obstructive Dismissive Unfriendly Vague Other	All - Provide a comment to support the answers provided	Y	Y	Y
X3	Did the agent/landlord ask if you would like to register with them?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X4	If so were any fees mentioned or explained?	Yes / No	You must itemise any fees and multiple charges described to you in full (e.g. reference fee, admin charge, background check fee etc.):	Y	Y	Y
X5	Did the agent/landlord ask you what type of property you were looking for?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X6	Did the agent/landlord ask you what your budget is?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X7	What was the monthly rent value and locations discussed with you?		Please state the rental prices quoted and the areas suggested	Y	Y	Y
X8	Did the agent/landlord ask you how long you were planning to stay/how long a tenancy you were looking for?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X9	Did the agent/landlord ask you your move date?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y

Section 2: Registering and finding properties (2)

#	Question Text	Answer Codes	Comment Requirements	F2F	Tel	Email
Stage 2: Registering and Finding Properties						
X10	Did the agent/landlord ask you how long you had lived in the area?	Yes / No	If Yes, probe why that matters?	Y	Y	Y
X11	Did the agent/landlord ask if you had a guarantor?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X12	Did the agent/landlord ask you if you had any references?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X13	Did the agent/landlord ask you what your employment was?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X14	Did the agent/landlord ask for your nationality?	Yes / No	If YES - explain what reason was given for asking this question.	Y	Y	Y
X15	Did the agent/landlord ask about your residency status/leave to remain?	Yes / No	If YES - what did they say and what reason was given for asking this question?	Y	Y	Y
X16	Were you asked to provide any documentation or other proofs?	Proof of address/Proof of right to reside/ proof of employment/proof of income/ any other documents/ None asked for	All - Provide a comment to explain and detail any documents you were asked for (if applicable)	Y	Y	Y
X17	Did the agent/landlord recognise the documents you mentioned?	Yes / No / Not Sure		Y	Y	Y
X18	Did the agent/landlord suggest any of the documents would be a problem?	Yes / No	If YES - please comment what the problem was	Y	Y	Y

X19	Did the agent/landlord ask for/suggest any alternative documents?	Yes / No	If YES - what documents did they ask you for.	Y	Y	Y
X20	Were any additional fees or other additional cost indicated?	Yes / No	If YES - must itemise and fees or charges that were mentioned at this point.	Y	Y	Y
X21	Were any further questions asked?	Yes / No	If YES - what other questions were asked of you.	Y	Y	Y
X22	Did, at any point, the agent/landlord or landlord mention the right to rent scheme?	Yes / No	If YES - what did they say.	Y	Y	Y
X23	Did the agent/landlord offer to put you on the mailing/contact list?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X24	Did the agent/landlord say they had any properties available/suggest any properties to you?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X25	If no properties were mentioned or suggested to you, was a reason given?	Yes / No	If YES - what was the reason given	Y	Y	Y
X26	If you were told no properties were available, at what point in the conversation was this mentioned?	When expected rents and locations were discussed / When the length of tenancy was discussed / When you were asked how long you had lived in the area / When you were asked about providing a guarantor / When you asked about providing references / When you asked about your employment / When you were asked about your nationality or residence status / When or if the agent mentioned the right to rent scheme / Before any questions were asked / At the end of the encounter / Other	All - provide a comment to explain when this occurred	Y	Y	
X27	If the agent/landlord said there were not properties available, did they say that there would be in the future?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y

Section 2: Registering and finding properties (3)

#	Question Text	Answer Codes	Comment Requirements	F2F	Tel	Email
	Stage 3: Follow Up Contact					
X28	Did you receive a follow up contact from the agent/landlord (after your initial enquiry) within 2 working days?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X29	Were you informed that the agent/landlord couldn't help you?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X30	Were you sent any properties to consider?	Yes / No		Y	Y	Y
X31	How many properties were you sent to consider?		Enter how many properties:	Y	Y	Y
X32	Were these from an automatic mailing list or a member of staff?	Mailing List / Member of Staff		Y	Y	Y
X33	Were you offered any viewings?	Yes / No	If YES - how many viewings were you offered?	Y	Y	Y
X34	Were you contacted for any further information?	Yes / No	If YES - what further information were you asked for.	Y	Y	Y

Appendix 2: Sample frame

Agents	Contact methods	Birmingham Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Dudley Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Sandwell Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Walsall Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Wolverhampton Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Total Contacts (pairs)
National and regional chain agents	Face-to-face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
	Telephone	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
	Email	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Independent agents e.g. only a few offices, may be focused on a particular segment of the rental market	Face-to-face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	12
	Telephone	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	12
	Email	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	16
Specialised letting services for students	Face-to-face	1	1			1	1					4
	Telephone	1	1			1	1					4
	Email	2	2									4
Online agents e.g. onlinelettingagent.com	Telephone											0
	Email	4	4	3	3			3	3			20
Total:	All	14	14	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	102
Landlords (including informal)	Contact methods	Birmingham Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Dudley Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Sandwell Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Walsall Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Wolverhampton Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Total Contacts (pairs)
Landlords advertising through online portals e.g. Gumtree	Telephone	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	14
	Email	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Landlords advertising through local newspaper advertisements	Telephone	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
	Email											0
Landlords advertising through cards in shop windows or private homes	Telephone	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
	Email											0
Total:	All	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	64
Contacts:		Birmingham Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Dudley Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Sandwell Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Walsall Contacts (pairs)	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Wolverhampton Contacts (pairs)	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Total Contacts (pairs)
	Total Contacts:	21	21	15	15	15	15	15	15	17	17	166
Encounters:		Birmingham Encounters	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Dudley Encounters	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Sandwell Encounters	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Walsall Encounters	Stoke on Trent Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Wolverhampton Encounters	Coventry Comparator Location Contacts (pairs)	Total Encounters
	Total Encounters: x2 contacts per encounter	42	42	30	30	30	30	30	30	34	34	332

Note: Each number of contacts represents a pair of shoppers e.g. if there is a '1' in a cell above, this represents a White British shopper and a Black and ethnic minority shopper. The table at the bottom refers to the total number of actual encounters.

Appendix 3: Question analysis

Stage 1: Initial contact

		OVERALL PHASE 1 [A]			OVERALL PHASE 1 [B]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [A]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [B]		
		Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%
E1. Did you get a response to your email enquiry within 2 working days?	Yes	18	30	60%	12	30	40%	13	30	43%	14	30	47%
	No	12	30	40%	18	30	60%	17	30	57%	16	30	53%
E2. Did you get a response to your second email enquiry within 2 working days?	Yes	4	12	33%	6	18	33%	6	17	35%	7	16	44%
	No	8	12	67%	12	18	67%	11	17	65%	9	16	56%
T1. Did the person who answered either deal with your enquiry or pass you on to a colleague to do so?	Deal with Enquiry	36	40	90%	37	40	93%	33	40	83%	38	40	95%
	Pass me on	4	40	10%	3	40	8%	7	40	18%	2	40	5%
T2. How was the call handled:	Told to call back another time	4	40	10%	1	40	3%	2	40	5.0%	0	40	0%
	Told they would call me back another time	3	40	8%	3	40	8%	6	40	15%	3	40	8%
	Handled my enquiry there and then	33	40	83%	36	40	90%	32	40	80%	37	40	93%
T3. Did you receive a call back within 2 working days?	Yes	1	7	14%	2	4	50%	0	8	0%	0	3	0%
	No	6	7	86%	2	4	50%	8	8	100%	3	3	100%
T4. Did you receive a call-back within 2 working days following your second call?	Yes	1	6	17%	1	2	50%	0	8	0%	1	3	33%
	No	5	6	83%	1	2	50%	8	8	100%	2	3	67%

Stage 2: Registering and finding properties

		OVERALL PHASE 1 [A]			OVERALL PHASE 1 [B]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [A]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [B]		
		Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%
X1. Did the agent/landlord say that they could help you with your enquiry?	Yes	49	70	70.0%	56	70	80.0%	49	64	76.6%	55	72	76.4%
	No	21	70	30.0%	14	70	20.0%	15	64	23.4%	17	72	23.6%
X2. Please describe the manner of the person you spoke to/corresponded with via email?	Encouraging	20	70	28.6%	21	70	30.0%	16	64	25.0%	24	72	33.3%
	Helpful	32	70	45.7%	42	70	60.0%	33	64	51.6%	43	72	59.7%
	Friendly	44	70	62.9%	40	70	57.1%	33	64	51.6%	43	72	59.7%
	Attentive	17	70	24.3%	26	70	37.1%	11	64	17.2%	31	72	43.1%
	Obstructive	1	70	1.4%	2	70	2.9%	1	64	1.6%	3	72	4.2%
X3. Did the agent/landlord ask if you would like to register with them?	Dismissive	10	70	14.3%	5	70	7.1%	10	64	15.6%	7	72	9.7%
	Unfriendly	3	70	4.3%	6	70	8.6%	4	64	6.3%	6	72	8.3%
	Vague	15	70	21.4%	5	70	7.1%	13	64	20.3%	13	72	18.1%
	Other	15	70	21.4%	6	70	8.6%	16	64	25.0%	9	72	12.5%
	Yes	10	70	14.3%	15	70	21.4%	6	64	9.4%	15	72	20.8%
X4. If so were any fees mentioned or explained?	No	60	70	85.7%	55	70	78.6%	58	64	90.6%	57	72	79.2%
	Yes	0	10	0.0%	10	15	66.7%	3	6	50.0%	9	15	60.0%
X5. Did the agent/landlord ask you what type of property you were looking for?	No	10	10	100.0%	5	15	33.3%	3	6	50.0%	6	15	40.0%
	Yes	28	70	40.0%	36	70	51.4%	24	64	37.5%	36	72	50.0%
X6. Did the agent/landlord ask you what your budget is?	No	42	70	60.0%	34	70	48.6%	40	64	62.5%	36	72	50.0%
	Yes	22	70	31.4%	30	70	42.9%	13	64	20.3%	36	72	50.0%
X8. Did the agent/landlord ask you how long you were planning to stay/how long a tenancy you?	No	48	70	68.6%	40	70	57.1%	51	64	79.7%	36	72	50.0%
	Yes	7	70	10.0%	14	70	20.0%	6	64	9.4%	18	72	25.0%
X9. Did the agent/landlord ask you your move date?	No	63	70	90.0%	56	70	80.0%	58	64	90.6%	54	72	75.0%
	Yes	14	70	20.0%	23	70	32.9%	11	64	17.2%	28	72	38.9%
X10. Did the agent/landlord ask you how long you had lived in the area?	No	56	70	80.0%	47	70	67.1%	53	64	82.8%	44	72	61.1%
	Yes	1	70	1.4%	8	70	11.4%	4	64	6.3%	5	72	6.9%
X11. Did the agent/landlord ask if you had a guarantor?	No	69	70	98.6%	62	70	88.6%	60	64	93.8%	67	72	93.1%
	Yes	3	70	4.3%	10	70	14.3%	3	64	4.7%	7	72	9.7%
X12. Did the agent/landlord ask you if you had any references?	No	67	70	95.7%	60	70	85.7%	61	64	95.3%	65	72	90.3%
	Yes	5	70	7.1%	14	70	20.0%	13	64	20.3%	14	72	19.4%
X13. Did the agent/landlord ask you what your employment was?	No	65	70	92.9%	56	70	80.0%	51	64	79.7%	58	72	80.6%
	Yes	11	70	15.7%	30	70	42.9%	12	64	18.8%	27	72	37.5%
X14. Did the agent/landlord ask for your nationality?	No	59	70	84.3%	40	70	57.1%	52	64	81.3%	45	72	62.5%
	Yes	0	70	0.0%	5	70	7.1%	1	64	1.6%	6	72	8.3%
X15. Did the agent/landlord ask about your residency status/leave to remain?	No	70	70	100.0%	65	70	92.9%	63	64	98.4%	66	72	91.7%
	Yes	0	0	0%	7	70	10.0%	0	0	0%	5	72	7.0%
X16. Were you asked to provide any documentation or other proofs?	No	0	0	0%	63	70	90.0%	0	0	0%	67	72	93.0%
	Proof of address	5	70	7.1%	7	70	10.0%	7	64	10.9%	9	72	12.5%
	Proof of right to reside	1	70	1.4%	8	70	11.4%	1	64	1.6%	7	72	9.7%
	Proof of employment	8	70	11.4%	6	70	8.6%	12	64	18.8%	2	72	2.8%
	Proof of income	7	70	10.0%	11	70	15.7%	6	64	9.4%	13	72	18.1%
	Any other documents	13	70	18.6%	11	70	15.7%	18	64	28.1%	11	72	15.3%
X17. Did the agent/landlord recognise the documents you mentioned?	None asked for	54	70	77.1%	49	70	70.0%	44	64	68.8%	51	72	70.8%
	Yes	14	16	87.5%	14	21	66.7%	19	20	95.0%	18	21	85.7%
	No	0	16	0.0%	0	21	0.0%	1	20	5.0%	0	21	0.0%
X18. Did the agent/landlord suggest any of the documents would be a problem?	Not Sure	2	16	12.5%	7	21	33.3%	0	20	0.0%	3	21	14.3%
	Yes	2	16	12.5%	4	21	19.0%	4	20	20.0%	3	21	14.3%
X19. Did the agent/landlord ask for/suggest any alternative documents?	No	14	16	87.5%	17	21	81.0%	16	20	80.0%	18	21	85.7%
	Yes	4	16	25.0%	8	21	38.1%	6	20	30.0%	5	21	23.8%
	No	12	16	75.0%	13	21	61.9%	14	20	70.0%	16	21	76.2%

		OVERALL PHASE 1 [A]			OVERALL PHASE 1 [B]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [A]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [B]		
		Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%
X20. Were any additional fees or other additional cost indicated?	Yes	13	70	19%	22	70	31%	17	64	27%	17	72	24%
	No	57	70	81%	48	70	69%	47	64	73%	55	72	76%
X21. Were any further questions asked?	Yes	12	70	17%	24	70	34%	15	64	23%	18	72	25%
	No	58	70	83%	46	70	66%	49	64	77%	54	72	75%
X22. Did, at any point, the agent/landlord mention the right to rent scheme?	Yes	0	70	0%	6	70	9%	0	64	0%	0	72	0%
	No	70	70	100%	64	70	91%	64	64	100%	72	72	100%
X23. Did the agent/landlord offer to put you on the mailing/contact list?	Yes	8	70	11%	19	70	27%	3	64	5%	13	72	18%
	No	62	70	89%	51	70	73%	61	64	95%	59	72	82%
X24. Did the agent/landlord say they had any properties available/suggest any properties to you?	Yes	23	70	33%	37	70	53%	30	64	47%	37	72	51%
	No	47	70	67%	33	70	47%	34	64	53%	35	72	49%
X25. If no properties were mentioned or suggested to you, was a reason given?	Yes	26	47	55%	16	33	49%	16	34	47%	16	35	46%
	No	21	47	45%	17	33	52%	18	34	53%	19	35	54%
X26. If you were told no properties were available, at what point in the conversation was this mentioned?	When expected rents & locations were discussed	5	35	14.3	6	20	30.0	2	21	9.5	2	18	11.1
	When the length of tenancy was discussed	1	35	2.9	0	20	0.0	0	21	0.0	0	18	0.0
	When you were asked how long you'd lived in the area	0	35	0.0	0	20	0.0	1	21	4.8	0	18	0.0
	When you were asked about providing a guarantor	0	35	0.0	0	20	0.0	0	21	0.0	0	18	0.0
	When you were asked about providing references	0	35	0.0	0	20	0.0	0	21	0.0	0	18	0.0
	When you were asked about your employment	0	35	0.0	0	20	0.0	0	21	0.0	2	18	11.1
	When you were asked about your nationality/residence status	0	35	0.0	1	20	5.0	0	21	0.0	0	18	0.0
	When/if the agent mentioned the right to rent scheme	0	35	0.0	0	20	0.0	0	21	0.0	0	18	0.0
	Before any questions were asked	22	35	62.9	6	20	30.0	12	21	57.1	10	18	55.6
	At the end of the encounter	3	35	8.6	2	20	10.0	2	21	9.5	1	18	5.6
Other	4	35	11.4	5	20	25.0	4	21	19.0	3	18	16.7	
X27. If the agent/landlord said there were no properties available, did they say that there would be in the future?	Yes	16	47	34%	6	33	18%	8	34	24%	7	35	20%
	No	31	47	66%	27	33	82%	26	34	77%	28	35	80%

Stage 3: Follow-up contact

		OVERALL PHASE 1 [A]			OVERALL PHASE 1 [B]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [A]			OVERALL COMPARATOR [B]		
		Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%	Total	Out of	%
X28. Did you receive a follow up contact from the agent/landlord (after your initial enquiry) within 2 working days?	Yes	12	70	17%	14	70	20%	10	64	16%	22	72	31%
	No	58	70	83%	56	70	80%	54	64	84%	50	72	69%
X29. Were you informed that the agent/landlord COULDN'T help you?	Yes	1	12	8%	0	14	0%	1	10	10%	2	22	9%
	No	11	12	92%	14	14	100%	9	10	90%	20	22	91%
X30. Were you sent any properties to consider?	Yes	9	11	82%	11	14	79%	5	9	56%	14	20	70%
	No	2	11	18%	3	14	21%	4	9	44%	6	20	30%
X32. Were these from an automatic mailing list or a member of staff?	Mailing List	2	9	22%	1	11	9%	1	5	20%	0	14	0%
	Member of Staff	7	9	78%	10	11	91%	4	5	80%	14	14	100%
X33. Were you offered any viewings?	Yes	6	9	67%	5	13	39%	4	8	50%	11	20	55%
	No	3	9	33%	8	13	62%	4	8	50%	9	20	45%
X34. Were you contacted for any further information?	Yes	0	11	0%	3	14	21%	0	9	0%	2	20	10%
	No	11	11	100%	11	14	79%	9	9	100%	18	20	90%

Appendix 4: Mystery shopping profiles/scenarios

Scenario 1 – Student looking for a shared property with friends and time-limited visa with temporary right to rent

Mystery shopper 1

Sex: Male or female

Age: 18–22

Ethnicity: White

Accent: British accent

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- second-year student from outside of the local area;
- British citizen;
- Socio-economic group is middle to high income (NS-SEC⁹ classification 1–4);
- enquiring about any properties (three to four bedrooms) for group of friends, all British citizens, none are from the local area;
- guarantors can be provided, all are employed part time;
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- current tenancy comes to an end at the end of June and have exams so are looking in advance for somewhere to go through the summer and their final year.

Mystery shopper 2

Sex: Male or female (same as mystery shopper 1)

Age: 18–22 (same as mystery shopper 1)

Ethnicity: Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, East Asian (e.g. Chinese)

Accent: Accent typical of the country of origin (Indian, Pakistani, Chinese)

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- second-year student from country matching ethnicity;
- holds passport for their enacted country (Pakistani, India, China, Singapore) [mystery shopper will not be required produce passport];
- holder of Tier 4 general student visa (if asked it has 18 months eligibility left);
- socio-economic group is middle to high income (NS-SEC classification 1–4);
- enquiring for any properties (three to four bedrooms) for group of friends, all British citizens, none are from the local area;
- guarantors can be provided, all are employed part time;
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- move date in six weeks;
- current tenancy comes to an end at the end of June and have exams so are looking in advance for somewhere to go through the summer and their final year.

⁹ National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification

Scenario 2 – An older male divorcee with only some of the documents necessary but has full right to rent

Mystery shopper 3

Sex: Male

Age: 55+

Ethnicity: White

Accent: British Accent

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- close to or already retired;
- British citizen;
- socio-economic classification lower middle to lower income (NS-SEC classification 5–7);
- divorced recently (lost possession of photo ID in moves and changes of residence);
- staying with adult child;
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- move date in six weeks.

Mystery shopper 4

Sex: Male (same as mystery shopper 3)

Age: 55+ (same as mystery shopper 3)

Ethnicity: Black African, Black Caribbean, Asian Indian, Asian Pakistani, Asian Bangladeshi

Accent: Accent typical of the country of origin (e.g. Nigerian, Jamaican, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- close to or already retired;
- British citizen;
- socio-economic classification lower middle to lower income (NS-SEC classification 5–7);
- divorced recently (lost possession photo ID in moves and changes of residence);
- staying with adult child;
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- move date in six weeks.

Scenario 3 – Low income single parent family, vulnerably housed but with full right to rents

Mystery Shopper 5

Sex: Female

Age: 25–35

Ethnicity: White

Accent: British

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- low waged employment (e.g. supermarket or retail staff);
- not receiving any benefits other than child benefit;
- British citizen;
- socio-economic classification lower middle to lower income (NS-SEC classification 7–8);
- one child (two to four years old);
- recently separated from British citizen partner;
- currently living with family member (e.g. aunty);
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- move date in six weeks.

Mystery shopper 6

Sex: Female (same as mystery shopper 5)

Age: 25–35 (same as mystery shopper 5)

Ethnicity: Black Caribbean, Black African (consider specific national origin, e.g. Jamaica, Nigeria, see background information)

Accent: Accent typical of the country of origin (e.g. Jamaican, Nigerian)

Location: West Midlands (e.g. phase one location – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)

Background information to be enacted:

- low waged employment (e.g. supermarket or retail staff);
- not receiving any benefits other than child benefit;
- indefinite leave to remain in the UK (entered on family visa then settled two years previously, has letter from the Home Office confirming this at home);
- socio-economic classification lower middle to lower income (NS-SEC classification 7–8).
- one child (four to six years old);
- recently separated from British citizen partner;
- currently living with family member (e.g. aunty);
- furnished or unfurnished property;
- move date in six weeks.

ISBN: 978-1-78246-910-0

ISSN: 1756-3666



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