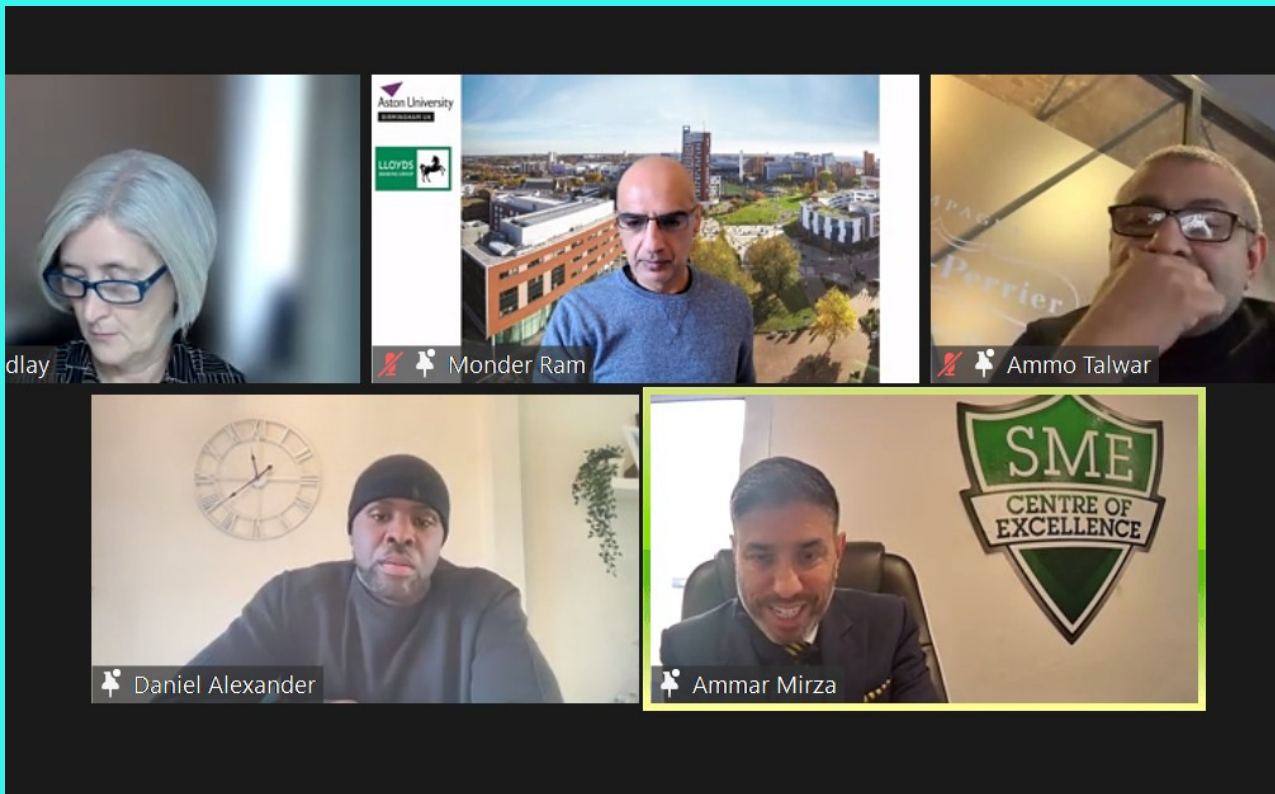


THE SILENT MAJORITY: A DEEP DIVE ON PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR MICROBUSINESSES

A workshop by the PrOPEL Hub and Centre for research in ethnic minority entrepreneurship





BACKGROUND

Our smallest businesses make up 99.3% of the UK's total business population. They account for 36% of the UK's turnover and serve an important role in the heart of communities.

However, microbusinesses face barriers in accessing support and advice to improve the productivity and wellbeing of their workforce.

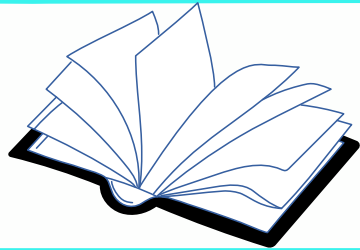
In December 2021, the ProPEL Hub held the first event in a series designed to address this issue. We were joined by representatives across policy, business and academia to consider what effective and inclusive microbusiness people management support might look like, and importantly, the contribution that the ProPEL Hub could make in supporting its evolution.

Speakers included:

- Professor Monder Ram, Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship;
- Professor Graeme Roy, Dean of External Engagement at the University Glasgow;
- Professor Paul Edwards, Professor of Employment Relations at the University of Birmingham;
- Emelia Quist, Head of Policy Research, FSB;
- Professor Carol Atkinson, Professor of Human Resource Management at Manchester Metropolitan University;
- Alex Till, Chief Executive of Menta;
- Jonny Gifford, Senior Research Advisor for CIPD;
- Professor Patricia Findlay, Director of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research at the University of Strathclyde;
- Ammo Talwar, CEO of Punch Records;
- Daniel Alexander, Daniel Alexander Films; and
- Ammar Mirza, Managing Director of Ammar M Ltd.

AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Themes put forward by our speakers and participants included::



EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN

Academic literature on microbusinesses is filled with gaps and significant unanswered questions – what does an effective people management structure look like within microbusinesses? How do we define and measure productivity within the context of these firms?

A SAFE SPACE TO ASK QUESTIONS

Microbusinesses need support and information about how to put the fundamental building blocks in place for their business. Support organisations and networks should create a safe space for micros to ask questions and learn what they don't know.



1

2

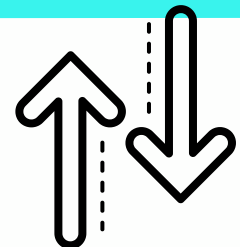
3

PRIORITISING WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

Time and resource to engage with support is a key barrier for microbusinesses. We need smarter and more engaged ways of delivering people management support that speaks to the right issues in the right way, e.g. softer leadership and management skills might be more appropriate than more formalised interventions.

DESIGNING FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Microbusinesses come in all different shapes, sizes and stages of growth. Business support should be varied and co-designed to reflect the distinct needs of the organisation it is intended to serve.



A JOINED UP APPROACH TO SUPPORT

To create sustainability and longevity, there should be a move towards a more coherent national government strategy for microbusinesses. We should also value and strengthen links to organic local networks which develop to fill gaps in national support and address local nuances.

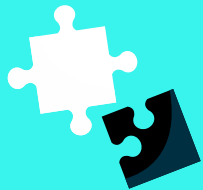
THE PROPEL HUB COMMITMENT

We believe the ProPEL Hub can make a contribution to supporting the evolution of more effective and inclusive people management support for microbusinesses. We see our role as being to:



EXPLORE

The ProPEL Hub will continue to drive forward the research agenda in this area and enhance understanding of how management is organized within microbusinesses and what works for productivity. We will seek to build up an evidence base on “what works” in delivering support interventions. Our ESRC funded research projects will be pivotal in this – learn more at www.propelhub.org/research



CONNECT

The ProPEL Hub will seek to act as a bridge between key stakeholders from the Microbusiness Community. Over the coming year, through our research projects and planned events, we will be connecting people who may not routinely talk to each other to explore opportunities and risks in the microbusiness support areas. Through our partnerships with support organisations such as CIPD, we will look to link organic networks and more formalised sources of support. We will also explore ways to connect microbusinesses to contemporary policy development



SHARE

The ProPEL Hub will provide a platform for showcasing best practice. Through our website, we will share examples of innovative and effective business support, such as The P-Word developed by Punch Records and Asian Business Connexions. We will also disseminate learning from our research on “what works” in approaches to engaging and collaborating with microbusiness stakeholders. We hope this will help to support a shift away from a top down approach to a more collaborative approach in co-designing business support interventions.

NEXT STEPS

Addressing the people management support blindspot for microbusinesses will not be easy. There are no quick or easy solutions. However we are keen to do what we can to drive forward this agenda.

In March 2022, we will be looking at this issue from a policy perspective and exploring how we put microbusinesses on the policy agenda? Stay up to date and register at www.propelhub.org.