

Annex 3: The Role Cards

A farmer – Bhupinder

I grow asparagus in the Vale of Evesham. The local micro-climate is perfect for market gardening and our produce is popular all over the country. Last year, we had a very hot and dry early summer: much more so than usual. We had to make sure that the plants were well-watered because we couldn't rely on the rain to do it for us. This was more expensive for us, but we had to do it if we were to get a good crop. Then, in the spring, we had heavy downpours that caused flooding in Evesham and some of the local villages. The rain saturated our fields but our crop was OK this time. My little business supports a dozen families, some of whom we bring to work by minibus from Birmingham and Dudley. Some of my neighbours' farms use pickers from Romania, Bulgaria and beyond, though they are not sure how that is going to work out, now that we have left the European Union.

A taxi driver – Zoltan

I live in Solihull, but my best business comes through Birmingham Airport. Some of the international travellers tip really well and every year I drive one boy all the way from the airport to his private school in Hertfordshire. His parents live in Hong Kong and they want him to have a good education in one of the UK's top schools. He and I have a good chat on the way down the motorway: we have got to know each other quite well over the years. I prefer that sort of trip to going into Birmingham itself. They have introduced a congestion charge for non-electric cars, which means I pay extra just to go into town. I might join one of those companies where the drivers work together, because they will rent you out a hybrid until you can afford your own. They're lovely, quiet cars and the customers like them, but they cost a lot for a person like me. I'd have to choose between buying a car or going to visit my family in Budapest, which I try to do at least once a year.

A shopkeeper – Meena

This shop is like the centre of the world: it's certainly the centre of *mine*. I work all hours and even weekends. People sometimes just pop in for a chat, don't even buy anything, but that's fine with me. We are a mile from the nearest supermarket and a lot of the people on this estate don't have their own cars, so there will always be business. My son brings in the deliveries every morning. He takes his van to the cash and carry at the industrial estate. He gets up even earlier than I do! We sell a bit of everything here: food, newspapers, cleaning stuff, petfood, sweets: we even have a little cash machine inside the shop. We don't have a lot of fresh stuff as it often goes to waste. Lately, I have noticed that a lot of people are buying those vegetable patties from Jamaica. I expect it's one of those fads and it will be something else that they're all mad about next year.

Annex 3: The Role cards (*continued*)

A retired person – Roisin

They say that the Irish built the railways. My late husband was a conductor on the trains and I worked in the ticket booth at Wolverhampton Station. His dad actually built the line. When we retired, we bought ourselves a little house on the edge of Shrewsbury. It's a quiet area, with regular buses to town, a green, a few shops and a primary school. We still have our post office, for now. There was talk about moving it into the supermarket down the road, but I don't like it there: lots of people, but nobody talks to you. They got me to sign a petition about it. You've got to do your bit, haven't you? I was born just after the Second War: people looked after each other in those days. Weekends, my daughter and her children come to visit. In the summer, we sit in the garden and have a cup of tea. She usually brings ginger cake and the children have a play. She drives over: I never did learn. When she's gone, I like to listen to the birds and watch the butterflies. There are more of them this year, I've noticed, which is nice.

A parent with two toddlers at home – Owen

I always wanted to be a Dad, so when my partner said she was expecting twins, it felt like the right thing to stop back with them and for her to carry on working. She's a ward sister and I was a care worker, so she always earned more anyway. A few of my mates teased me about it and I do get the occasional funny look, but I love spending time with Seren and Rhiannon, my two-year-old girls. My partner says it's because I'm just a big kid myself! My Nan says this bit of our lives will be over in the blink of an eye: they will be in school and I will be back at work before I know it. We're in a Staffordshire village and people here are dead friendly, though when the weather is wet, there's nowhere much you can go with a twin buggy and no car. The bus to Burton-on-Trent comes through twice a day, but it's a wrestle to get onto it, so usually we just stay local. When the weather is good, we mess about in the stream or go to playgroup and the park. Every day is slightly different.

A conservationist – Hiromi

I have always loved nature, so I did a biology degree and was very active in environmental groups at university in Coventry. When I finished uni, I went off to work with the local wildlife trust. It is great to have a job where you can work outdoors and feel you are making a real difference, whether it is helping children make bug hotels or finding out information about yet another planning application for new houses. In this job, you see the best of people and sometimes (I am afraid to say) you can see the worst as well. This part of the world is famous for its cars, but I would like it to be just as famous one day for being the 'green workshop of the world', making useful products that protect nature and get bought all over the world. I try to do my bit in my home life, too: I eat a plant-based diet, to keep my carbon footprint down, and unless the weather is truly awful I cycle to work.