A Journey to Inclusion
Young Black and Talented

A supplementary resource for the **Inclusive Employers Toolkit** for the construction, technology & digital sectors

MAYOR OF LONDON

ACTION FOR RACE EQUALITY

Contents

This resource builds on insights from employers from the construction and technology and digital industries who have embarked on their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) journey with the use of the GLA's Inclusive Employers Toolkit (IET).

The resource captures examples of how employers are supporting under-represented groups such as young Black men or BAME staff in general and aims to help a wider range of employers at various stages of their ED&I journey, specifically:

- Those who have just started on an ED&I journey
- Those who are mid-way and are reviewing their practice and reflecting on progress to date.
- Those who consider themselves proficient or competent ED&I organisations and can draw out best practice.

> **"**
>
> *After looking at the toolkit, I feel like I've literally jumped right out of the statistics from it. I've been historically educated, but unfortunately in the lower employment grouping and I've never been able to get out of the low pay, low opportunity scenario, which has actually been a bit depressing.*
>
> **Keon Simms, Project Manager, Jacobs, 2022**

How to use this resource

The insights, reflections and advice in this resource can be used by any employer, across all sectors. It can be used to cross reference against your own company's journey at any point within the following four key areas of the GLA's IET:

- Commitment
- Engagement and Recruitment
- Retention and Progression
- Suppliers

This resource supports the implementation of the IET published in 2020 and is designed to build on your existing plans and provide a shared determination to help embed an intersectional approach to greater equality, diversity and inclusion specifically, but not exclusively relating to young black men.

The insights from the employers who were interviewed have contributed to the practical support in this resource with a focused look at:

1. Culture
2. Planning and strategy
3. Processes
4. People
5. Leadership
6. Data and Targets
7. Voice
8. Visibility
9. Impact

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Our insights through the employers engaged in developing this resource along with ARE's work with young black men and the **Moving on Up (MoU) initiative** for the last seven years has highlighted the determination some employers have to create a more representative workforce and a more inclusive work environment.

There is recognition by businesses in both construction and technology and digital sectors of the business case for diversity and inclusion and an acceptance for the need to do much more, to be consistent and for change to happen at a quicker pace.

There is a need to create pathways for young people into the sectors and to recognise that looking ahead, the pool of labour will be made up of people mainly from Black and other minority ethnic communities.

The challenge for cultural change in any size of business is not insurmountable, however, there needs to be a sustained commitment to aligning ED&I with other strategic business drivers such as innovation, sustainability and health and safety.

Employers who participated in developing this resource are changing the narrative to enable better outcomes for young Black men and other under-represented groups based on what they see as a compelling business case for diversity.

To improve employment outcomes for under-represented groups through an intersectional lens, ED&I needs to be a central theme that directs and underpins government and business decisions to make change happen; through education,

strengthening requirements around compliance, support from public services and specialist organisations.

It is time for all employers to be confident to make the changes needed to harness the benefits of diversity to contribute to their success and to change the futures of young Black men.

Drivers for change

A common driver across both construction and technology sectors has been the influence of the death of **George Floyd** in 2020 and the rise of the global **Black Lives Matter (BLM)** movement.

These were pivotal moments which helped to propel and bring ED&I issues to the fore as a catalyst and enabler for organisations; reinforcing the importance of the ED&I agenda, particularly where organisations had already started that journey. For others, it helped shape and progress their commitment to improving diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

It is important to maintain the momentum from these important and triggering events. Change in behaviour, mindsets and processes require time and commitment to sustain the work as a priority.

WORKFORCE INTEGRATION NETWORK (WIN)

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

> *All Londoners deserve to have the chance to thrive and reach their potential. That's why I established the Workforce Integration Network in 2018 to help young Black men overcome the significant and disproportionate barriers they face when seeking employment and training. Ensuring more Londoners have the chance to make the most of their talents will help us to create a stronger, fairer, more dynamic London for everyone*

Sadiq Khan launched the Workforce Integration Network (WIN) programme in 2018. At the time, there was a significant under-representation of young Black men in the tech and construction sectors which were key growth areas for London. **Just four per cent of young Black men were working in the construction sector in London.** (Census 2011)

The challenge for tech is similar, with young Black men making up fewer than 5% of the sector. (Greater London Authority, 'Voices of the Under-represented', 2019)

The WIN programme's overall aims are to support and influence business leaders to tackle the structural barriers faced by under-represented groups and to improve pathways for them through education and within the workplace. For example, through its **Inclusive Employers Toolkit**, **Design Lab** and Academies programmes and the **Mayor's Good Work Standard.**

It takes an intersectional approach to diversity and inclusion by examining how ethnicity interacts with other factors, such as age, gender, education and class, in shaping people's experiences with work and enabling targeted solutions informed by the experience and voices of those under-represented groups.

The ongoing challenge is to create better employment outcomes for under-represented groups with a focus on those who are disproportionately affected, for example, because of their age and race or race and gender.

Young Black men in London continue to be disproportionately affected by unemployment as are **Black women**, **Pakistani** and **Bangladeshi women** and **Black men over 50**.

INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS TOOLKIT

The **Inclusive Employers Toolkit (IET)** was launched in September 2020. The Toolkit provides a step-by-step resource to support employers to take action on workforce equality, diversity and inclusion. It aims to help employers improve the recruitment, retention and progression of young Black men within the workplace and more broadly improve employment outcomes for young Black men and other under-represented groups across London. It also provides support for employers who want to improve diversity within their supply chain.

The Toolkit was developed by **Action for Race Equality (ARE)** formerly BTEG, as part of the **Moving On Up** initiative, in partnership with businesses across the finance, tech and construction sectors.

WHY YOUNG BLACK MEN?

Around 90,000 young men in London are from Black and mixed ethnic groups — around 18%, or nearly one in five, of all young men in London. (GLA ethnic group population projections, estimates vary)

Unemployment

Long-term unemployment data, from the Annual Population Survey (APS) for 2017-2019 shows 3.7% of Black men were long-term unemployed compared to 0.9% of White men.
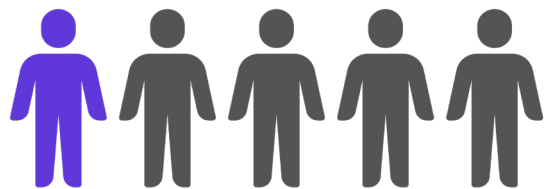
1 in 5 of all young men in London are from Black and mixed ethnic groups

The pandemic disproportionately affected young Black people, with national unemployment rates more than three times higher than those for young White people at the end of 2020. (APS Sep-Dec 2020)

In 2021, the picture for many young Black Londoners remained stark. More than twice as many young Black men were out of work — 37.4%, compared to 17.5% unemployed young White Londoners. (APS Jul - Jun 2021)

Insecure work

The definition of insecure employment* is taken from the GLA's **Economic Fairness** measures:

- From the 2020 Annual Population Survey, 21,000 Black men working in London were in insecure employment. 12.2% of black men were in insecure employment compared to 6.1% of all White British individuals.

- From the 2021 Annual Population Survey, 18,000 Black men working in London were in insecure employment.
- 9.0% of black men were in insecure employment compared to 5.3% of all White British individuals.
- The London average in 2021 was 6.2%.
- 11.2% of Black women were in insecure employment in 2021.

NB: These estimates are derived from the Annual Population Survey in 2020 and 2021, and should be treated with caution, as the labour market went through massive disruption as a result of the pandemic. The introduction of the 'furlough' scheme may have had knock-on effects on those in insecure employment.

Graduates in the employment markets in England

Educational attainment does not improve the picture for young Black graduates in London.

A recent **report** by Youth Futures Foundation into the impact of the pandemic on the youth labour market found the fall in employment rates has been four times greater for young Black people than for young White people. The fall for young Asian people has been nearly three times greater. (Youth Futures Foundation 2021)

* We define economic fairness as when all Londoners benefit from the city's success, so that opportunity and prosperity are shared. This means tackling discrimination and disadvantage, and reducing the inequality by narrowing the gaps between people. Meeting this objective requires us to acknowledge a number of instances of unfairness – from the employment gaps, pay gaps or lack of access to opportunities that certain groups experience, through to London's high cost of living, and the existence of poverty and destitution.
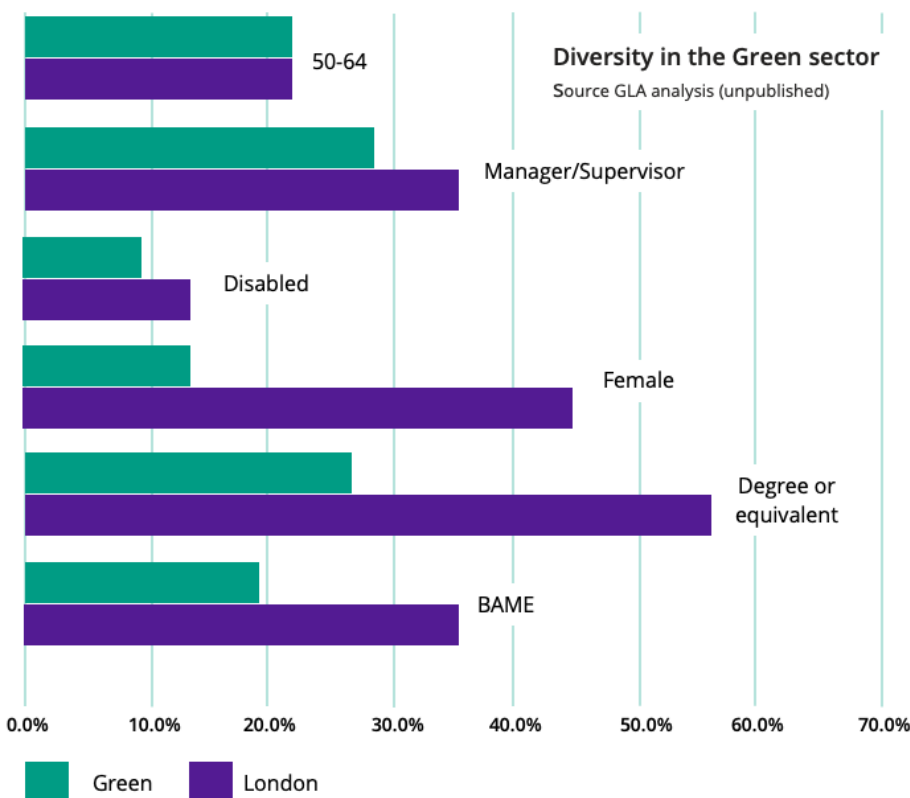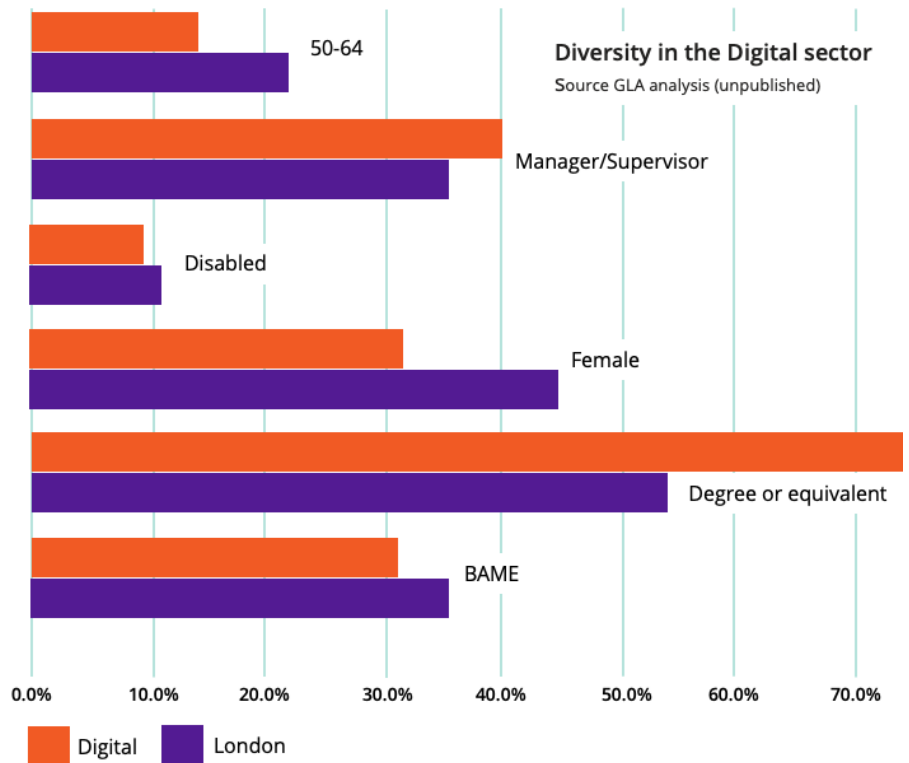
- In **2019 unemployment for Black graduates was at 13%, compared to 4% for white graduates.** The COVID-19 crisis is likely to have exacerbated this issue.
- Black graduates are more likely to be unemployed. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data for 2019 showed unemployment for **Black graduates aged 21-30 was at 12.5% compared to 3.7% for White graduates aged 21-30**. (GOV.UK, 2020. Graduate Labour Market Statistics, 2019)
- LFS data for 2021 showed unemployment for **Black graduates aged 16-64 was at 7%, compared to 2.7% for White graduates aged 16-64**. (GOV.UK, 2021, Graduate Labour Market Statistics, 2020)
- In 2021 Black graduates are less likely to be in high skilled employment** **Black graduates aged 21-30 high skilled employment was at 48.7% compared to 60.9% for White graduates aged 21-30**. (Labour Force Survey data, 2021)

*High Skilled Employment – a job categorised within the Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) codes 1-3. SOC 1-3 includes managers, directors and senior officials; professional occupations and associate professional and technical occupations.

WHY CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY?

Both sectors have a diversity and inclusion deficit which is reflected in the charts, with the construction sector having wider disparities for BAME, degree-level educated, females and disabled people.

Both sectors are expected to continue to be a significant growth area within the London economy. However, diversity in both remains relatively low, particularly for young Black men — fewer than 5% of staff within tech are young Black men.

Diversity in the Digital sector
Source GLA analysis (unpublished)

Categories (top to bottom): 50-64, Manager/Supervisor, Disabled, Female, Degree or equivalent, BAME

Legend: Digital, London

Diversity in the Green sector
Source GLA analysis (unpublished)

Categories (top to bottom): 50-64, Manager/Supervisor, Disabled, Female, Degree or equivalent, BAME

Legend: Green, London

In construction 73% of jobs are held by men, with 74% from a White ethnic background. (GLA Economics 2022)

In the **Chartered Institute of Building Special Report on Diversity and Inclusion in Construction**, it is estimated that 1% or fewer BAME employees are in senior roles and representation overall for people from a Black and other minority ethnic background is estimated between 5-7%.

Construction has an ageing workforce relative to the economy as a whole and there is a clear and increasing need for construction to engage more effectively with diverse groups and particularly with Generation Z (those born after 1996).

THE BUSINESS CASE

Although many employers recognise the compelling case for diversity and reflect this as part of the rationale for diversifying their recruitment, this has not yet translated into real change in terms of representation within the workforce of people from different ethnic minority groups.

Where they are employed, they are often found in traditional roles or employed in roles below management level, such as retail, catering, textiles and nursing.

It's not just a case for creating a fairer workplace. Research widely denotes diverse and inclusive workplaces as synonymous with happier and more productive employees.

If there was race equality across the UK labour market, forecasts suggest there would be a £24billion annual uplift to the economy, which represents 1.3% of UK GDP.

Diverse and inclusive workplaces are also associated with higher individual performance, where employees are better able to innovate and feel more engaged.

The IET offered practical and realistic achievements towards short, medium, and long-term goals for employers through a focus on four core areas:

- Commitment
- Engagement & Recruitment
- Retention and Progression
- Suppliers

Within each of these areas, it is also important to look at each strand through a lateral lens; strategic, operational and relationships.

The employers contributing to this resource shared some of their reflections and the factors they considered as they took forward their work on ED&I.

The actions set out below focus on the key areas highlighted by employers of best practice.

STRATEGIC

ED&I tends to continue to be about initiatives, relying on people with an interest to start initiatives and take them forward.

- Develop an ED&I roadmap or action plan to **set a clear direction and expectations in terms of behaviours and values.**

- **Publish gender and ethnicity pay gaps reports**, set stretching targets that aim to tackle these and other evidence-based issues, whether that is in terms of **overall representation, retention, wellbeing or progression.**

- Set **targets for the recruitment of under-represented groups** whether that is women, Black professionals, young Black men, Black Women or people with a disability.

- Plan how you will measure outcomes and impacts of the initiatives and actions you take from a quantitative and qualitative viewpoint.

- Use the **Workforce Data Equality Guide**. Developed by the GLA in

partnership with **Business in the Community (BiTC)**. It provides practical, step-by-step guidance on how to collect, analyse and act on equalities data in your organisation and, importantly, shape your strategy.

- Think about how you can develop a robust and overt anti-racist approach. By adopting a zero-tolerance approach to racism and harassment this sets the standards of behaviour you expect based on your values.

- Establish mechanisms, for example, **'junior boards'** to give people the opportunity to feed into decision making at a corporate strategic level.

RELATIONSHIPS & PARTNERSHIPS

Work in partnership to support the development of career pathways for young people through working with schools, colleges, and communities. This could be through identifying **secondments**, work **tasters/experience** and **apprenticeships** that will help young people to better understand the offer and the job roles available.

- Introduce and incorporate Emotional Intelligence to build relationships internally and externally with suppliers and stakeholders.

- Build trust with staff and prospective communities. Whether this is about gathering employee data, new initiatives or reaching out to new communities, it is important to build trust through transparency and openness about your intentions.

OPERATIONAL

Work experience is highly valued by young people in helping them make their career choices, but also in gaining valuable insight into the world of work.

There is a significant opportunity to increase attraction and take up by introducing more tasters, shadowing, internships, and apprenticeship opportunities at various levels.

- Open up your recruitment and selection processes to embed diversity as a thread running through how you recruit and induct staff into the organisation or into new roles. Many of the organisations interviewed are changing their culture and their diversity profile by incorporating basic changes into their recruitment practice.

- Look at how marketing, branding and the optics can inform communities and young people about your company. Using images that are diverse and using messaging that is inclusive may change perceptions around construction and tech stereotypes.

- Take positive action to create or join schemes that offer targeted support for specific under-represented groups; for example, create internships or join the 10,000 Black internship schemes.

YOUR ED&I JOURNEY

INSIGHTS FROM CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY SECTOR EMPLOYERS & THE INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS TOOLKIT

The insights from the employers who contributed to this supplementary resource emphasise the need to invest time and commitment to develop a culture that supports ED&I actions. Their reflections add to, and extend, some of the actions and considerations contained in the IET.

For example, leadership and culture lead naturally to a strategic approach to reviewing, initiating and implementing change in the following key areas:

- Planning & Strategy
- Processes
- People
- Data & Targets
- Voice
- Visibility
- Impact
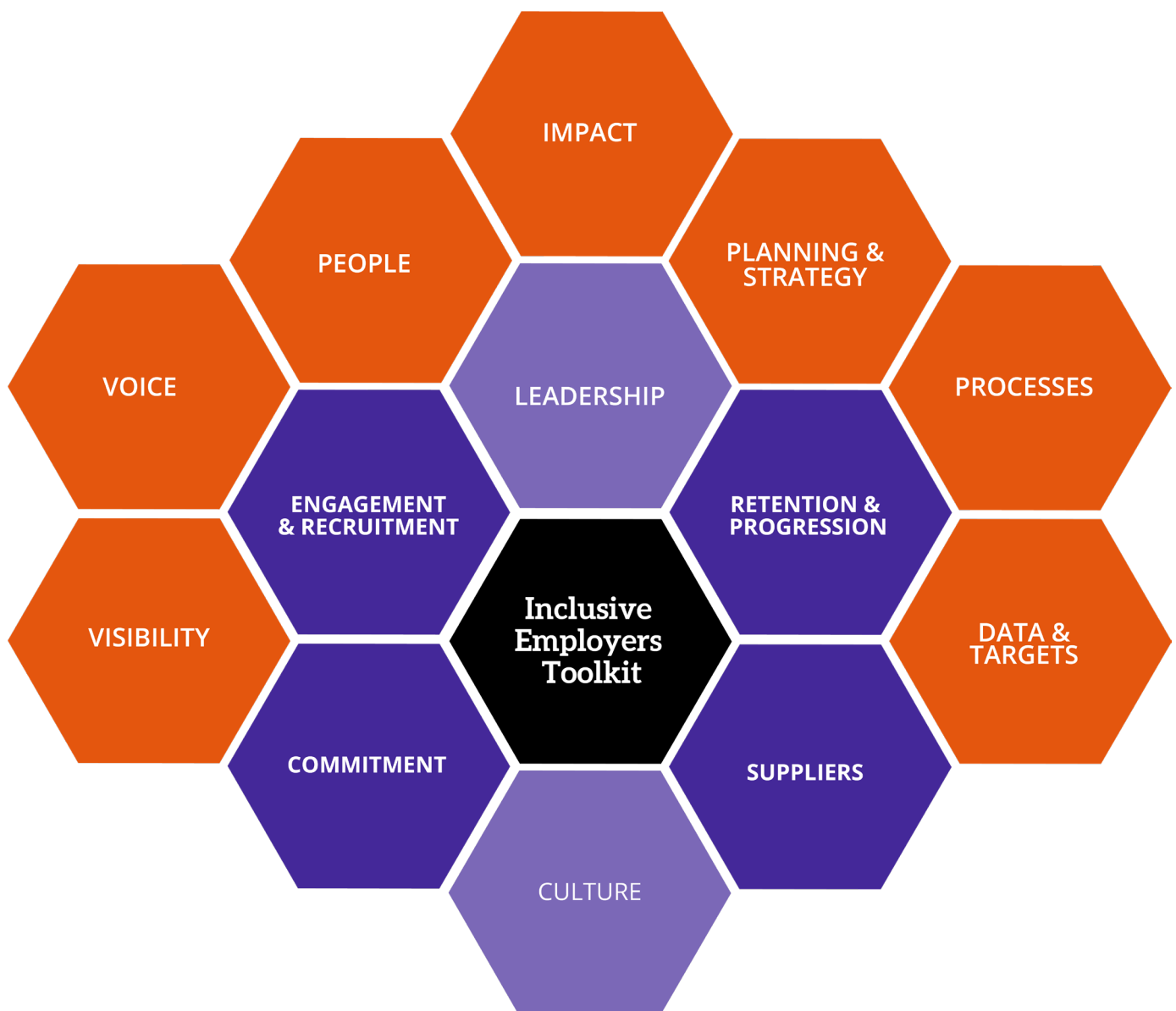
These nine areas are strategically and practically linked to the core elements of the IET and it is helpful to consider them in the context of the IET's key themes:

- Engagement & Recruitment
- Retention & Progression
- Suppliers
- Commitment

The focus on Employer Practice & Culture

ED&I must be built into your company's strategy, ethos, and values as a natural practice – something that is done without having to initiate separate initiatives as an afterthought.

An organisation's culture will have developed over time, with many people conforming to the standard practices without really questioning them. It is easier and feels safe.

"They [the next generation] will only want to work for companies that represent and are aligned to their values. So, I think it's about having a very clear statement purpose of what it is we stand for and what our responsibilities are.

I think from a values-based proposition, we recognise that you cannot separate what you do inside the company from what you do outside the company. For instance, in terms of how we analyse social impact, we feel that we have a responsibility to create positive interventions within the community where we think there's the highest need and where we can make the greatest impact.

Jane Hollinshead, Managing Director of People Culture and Customer Experience, Canary Wharf Group.

CONSIDER THIS

Think about how you can remove the discomfort and fear often associated with ED&I. Consider introducing neuroscience and behavioural science as an approach to **Diversity of Thought** as part of your training, policy and programme development.

Create neutral, safe and judgement free space to share experiences, ask questions, but importantly propose new and different ways of doing things that may challenge traditional practices – enable ways to disrupt and interrupt that culture.

For some people ED&I is uncomfortable and potentially triggering. This may be due to a fear of saying the wrong thing, bad personal experiences, lack of confidence, an inability to question or challenge the status quo, or not fully understanding the issues or the impact on work colleagues.

PLANNING & STRATEGY MOVING FROM INITIATIVES TO ACTION

The employers showcased through the case studies in this resource highlight the passion employers have to create both a more representative workforce, and a more inclusive work environment.

There was a recognition of the business case for diversity and inclusion but ED&I work often remains a series of initiatives rather than a strategic one that embeds ED&I in their interactions; with client and staff relationships, through service delivery, product innovations and wider engagement with local diverse communities.

Good practice in Construction and Technology companies

This resource has been developed through the insights of leading companies in both the construction and tech sectors. Full case studies can be downloaded **here**.

Profusion is a small organisation which has made significant changes through implementing a strategy that incorporates a host of complementary initiatives to support and drive an inclusive culture and by enabling a diverse approach to recruitment and engagement.

However, they recognise the challenge will be to maintain that as they grow and will need to develop a strategic plan to incorporate and embed the initiatives and the current culture going forward.

Jacobs' Plan **Beyond Strategy** is its sustainability commitment that aligns to the UN sustainable business objectives. As part of this commitment, it has published an Advancing Justice and Equality Charter, which sets out its commitment to living inclusion.

Rebecca Scott, Global Talent Resources, Programme Management at Jacobs said, *"we live inclusion, it is one of our four core values within Jacobs, and it's embedded right from the CEO downwards, right through the different levels of management and into individuals."*

Balfour Beatty developed their Black Inclusion Plan after signing up to the **Audeliss and INvolve Open Letter** and has gone on to pilot initiatives to improve inclusion through their 'Right to Respect' programme, developing affinity groups, a reverse mentoring programme, focus groups with BAME colleagues, and exercises to raise awareness of diverse experiences within the business.

Costain described the importance of having events, such as a leadership impact day, to help develop an inclusive culture and acknowledge that everyone in the organisation is at different stages in their inclusion journey. This would entail individuals in the organisation stepping away from their normal activities to talk about inclusion in the round (inclusive teams, active allyship and psychological safety).

Diversity of Thought

Creating a diverse workforce is essential. But running alongside this should be the recognition that a) it can potentially take years to recruit and progress people from BAME backgrounds into senior management and b) the few people that do progress will carry the 'burden' of representing all other people of a similar background.

The concept of Diversity of Thought can complement this process by ensuring that any project or programme design incorporates frameworks that enable us to understand and recognise a situation through multiple and intersecting lenses.

The diverse inputs can introduce ideas, perspectives and solutions that would otherwise be side-tracked – or probably not even perceived.

People bring different cultures, backgrounds, and personalities to the table — and those differences shape how they think.

CONSIDER THIS

Diversity of Thought is not instead of diverse representation, but in fact it is one part of the equation. It can potentially:

- Prevent the burden on that 'representative' in the group/team.
- Prevent/avoid groupthink.
- Overcome subjective overconfidence and encourage intellectual curiosity.
- Listen to under-represented opinions.
- Increase awareness of unconscious biases and look beyond stereotypes.
- Prevent Confirmation Bias
- Help decisions and actions to be considered through multiple and spherical lenses.

PROCESSES

Several employers, though at different stages of their ED&I journey, invariably referred to external drivers as having influenced them or had been a catalyst for change within their respective organisations. These include **Balfour Beatty**, **Canary Wharf Group**, **Costain**, **Mace**, **GLA**, **Lendlease**, **Profusion**.

Fundamentally, the death of George Floyd in 2020 and the rise of the global Black Lives Matter movement were pivotal moments which helped to propel and bring equality, diversity and inclusion issues to the fore as a catalyst and enabler.

For some businesses, it reinforced the importance of the agenda, particularly where they had already started that journey. For other businesses it influenced and progressed their agenda. Many organisations in construction signed up to the **Audeliss and Involve Open Letter**, following the murder of George Floyd, and commitments made within that.

However, **LinkedIn** data shows that while companies still talk about diversity, the conversation has slowed down and is declining.

Businesses need to take this opportunity to not only continue the conversation, but to implement and uphold more impactful strategies to see real, lasting culture, behaviour and mindset change within their organisation.

To build truly inclusive work cultures, a review and reflection of all your processes is required. We must ask whether people from BAME backgrounds, particularly young Black men, feel included and, importantly, if they feel they belong.

Hiring for diverse backgrounds is only one aspect of an employee's experience. Inclusion does not come from diversity – inclusion and belonging are about feelings.

Also consider

- **Unconscious bias and how to interrupt bias.**
- **Be aware of, talk about and recognise micro-aggressions and their impact on people.**

Bias exists in all of us and is a natural by-product of everything we have been exposed to throughout our lives. It starts with the messages we receive from our parents/guardians, family and peers, images and narratives, social media and algorithms, our life and lived experiences, world events and politics, education (content) and geography/location.

Our 'socialisation' plays a big part in how we think, react and behave. While many of us do not consciously or explicitly act out our biases, the ramifications of implicit or unconscious bias can and have been embedded into processes, team and organisation's cultures and systems over time.

These unconscious biases, often played out through micro-slights or micro-behaviours, are often ignored and allowed to manifest, resulting in the 'unconscious' reactions, questions, prejudices slipping into our everyday behaviours and mindsets.

Leaders can start addressing this by helping employees understand how individuals are impacted by unconscious bias, and what actions continue to reinforce biases.

One way to build awareness and address unconscious bias is to encourage every employee to review, question and analyse their own personal biases and assumptions.

Leaders and employees should consider keeping a 'thought' journal to process their own biases. Recording instances of stereotyping as they occur will help people become more aware as they start to make those biases more conscious. This will help people observe when they begin to stereotype individuals so they can refute and replace biases.

Acknowledge and manage the impact of bias and micro-aggressions on young Black men. Regular experiences can cause trauma, resulting in de-motivation, low self-esteem and low levels of engagement.

- **Consider how wellbeing is included into supervision and appraisals.**
- **Are all managers clear and confident about protocols and policies to follow when a young Black man shares an experience or exposure to implicit or unconscious bias?**

PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY CHAINS

Future-proofing and managing supply chains to ensure ED&I is integral and a crucial action. Reflections from the employers contributing to this resource include:

- Employers stating their size is a reason not to diversify their supply chain.

- The construction industry benefits from a strong tradition of subcontracting, putting them in a good position to diversify.

- It can be challenging to achieve change in the supply chain when there isn't a strategic objective to do so. One ED&I specialist highlighted that it can be difficult to influence colleagues working in procurement or bidding teams unless ED&I is built into the procurement requirements.

- Tech employers aren't challenged enough to diversify their supply chain. For example, construction is highly regulated with **Section 106** and **Environmental Social Governance (ESG) regulations** to drive ED&I within the business. These drivers don't exist in tech so, improving diversity and inclusion relies on a voluntary approach.

- SMEs with fewer resources can struggle to allocate sufficient time and resources to identify inclusive suppliers. Such support is a possible role for the GLA, as is the need to map and share existing support services

- Some leading construction firms, such as **Jacobs** and Mace, have developed policies and strategies tied to legislation or regulation (the Social Value Act, and ESG Standards) to drive forward their aspirations to diversify their supply chain.

CONSIDER THIS

- When putting out tenders including key,probing questions about ED&I, for suppliers is important. This should be at the initial stage, so all companies get the opportunity to display their ED&I credentials in this space.

- Assessments and shortlisting should be undertaken by people who are well informed/aware of ED&I and can measure/score without prejudice and bias.

- 'Weighting' and the language of questions is an important factor to ensure smaller BAME-led suppliers are not excluded. This should be considered and agreed, appropriate to the service/goods which are being procured.

- Your company's core values and principles should be understood by the supplier and that you are testing them on their understanding. This is important at tender stage and then ongoing, if successful, when contracting with the company.

- Having diverse suppliers can add value. They will bring new perspectives. Engage with your suppliers to not only assess how they are performing, but also to learn and share good practice on how they are tackling and driving positive ED&I.

- Supporting small suppliers with training, or building the pipeline of suppliers may be another approach on ED&I, ensuring they are aligned to the wider strategy and have the awareness of recognising opportunities through diverse suppliers.

Develop a strategic training programme

Good ED&I training helps employees understand why there is a strategic effort to ensure everyone feels included and 'belongs'. It explores how systemic, implicit

"It (inclusive culture) is something that obviously is wider than race. It's about using an intersectional lens in everything that we do. That's the culture that we are going to try to put together. I don't know when exactly we're going to be in that position - we're not there yet."

Construction Employer

biases and prejudices can impact how people work and interact at work.

Training can cover anything, from concepts of time and communication styles to self-identity and dealing with conflict.

Any training commissioned should focus on training that's relevant to their specific organisation and employees, and that aligns with their broader diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and identified challenges.

Partnering with an external specialist consultant who specialises in areas of race, racism, bias should be considered to help build customised training programmes for both the organisation, as well as those that are function-specific.

Mix up the people attending the training. A diverse cross-section of experiences allows enhanced perspective, which will spur conversations and insights.

It's critical that any communication emphasises that any training or workshops are part of a wider strategic plan and cannot be seen to be the 'magic wand'.

Get feedback

Create safe and confidential spaces for people to share their feedback, to get a better understanding of what's going on under the surface. For example, using anonymous pulse surveys across the workforce will arm leaders with the

information needed to make smarter decisions and reduce or eliminate any patterns of discrimination or biases within a particular branch or area of the organisation.

Consider new and creative digital tools to facilitate conversations and transparently communicate about how they're feeling.

Review company policies

Company policies and implementation – such as the way an internal issue is handled – can play a key role in perpetuating existing problems, often leading to poor staff retention.

If employers start to rethink their policies, they can address and replace negative processes or interactions with more positive ones.

Leaders first need to decide whether policies enable or perpetuate discrimination such as racism or sexism in the workplace and reshape them to move towards a more equitable workplace.

PEOPLE

It goes without saying that people make the company. Ensuring all people are respected, included and recognised needs to be at the forefront of your ED&I strategy. This needs to be considered from the points – before, during and after.

Before someone joins - what efforts are being made to encourage young Black men to join your company; during - how are young black men treated and made to feel they belong; and after -once in your company what support and progression routes are available for young Black men; or on the flip side, what are the barriers.

We made changes to our job advert, to make it more open and inclusive. Instead of looking for unicorns and very specific pro-files, we opened up ourselves in terms of what we were looking for - what's really im-portant? In all cases, our interview process was still at the same standard - everybody was judged on merit - we really just tried to get applications from a broader group than we typically would."

Poonam Flammarion
Head of Talent Academy, Cloudreach

©Greater London Authority

ENGAGEMENT & RECRUITMENT

Some of the employers contributing to this resource from the construction and tech sector recognised the importance of seeking to engage stakeholders internally and externally.

- Employers reach out to staff through surveys, working and affinity groups, regular ED&I communication, training and education.

- ED&I behaviours are normally aligned with organisational values. Organisations are not always likely to make people accountable for ED&I particularly in terms of creating an inclusive team environment or to recruit in a diverse way.

- Externally, employers often work with schools at an early stage and are moving from the traditional interventions at university level to working with primary schools; recognising that future growth and success will depend upon how the next generation know and feel about their sector and the opportunities on offer. This chimes with research that indicates young people are making decisions about career choices at a much earlier age. (Research by Stace published 2022)

- Both sectors and their industry bodies understand the need to 'attract' the Generation Z workforce and need to overcome the lack of knowledge young people have of the jobs available.

- There are negative perceptions around construction jobs being low skilled, low paid, White male, and perceptions around tech jobs consisting of 'unicorns', 'White boys and not girls'. They are working with industry bodies and schools to engage with students and those who inform and influence their career choices, such as parents, teachers and career advisers.

- Organisations within both sectors are making efforts to engage with socio-economically disadvantaged communities. In construction, companies are working with local authorities, for example, **Section 106** and with specialist organisations and non-profits e.g. **Black Professionals**, **Women into Construction**.

- The take-up of apprenticeships and the offer of these is variable. This is reflected by research which shows 18% fewer people began construction apprenticeships in London in 2020/21 than in 2017/18. (London Assembly Economy Committee).

- A flexible approach is needed to work experience/career development through apprenticeships or other interventions, such as paid internships LLDC found that internships work better as a way into the creative sector, helping to build networks and social capital within the sector which is key to future employment.

- Some young Black men's experiences in terms of guidance for their career choices at school were mixed, with a focus on university rather than vocational routes. They had to find work experience opportunities for themselves. This chimes with recent research indicating careers advice provision is variable (the report found that while 46% of 17-18 year-olds said they had received a "large amount" of information on university routes, just 10% of students said they had received this for apprenticeships. (Sutton Trust, March 2022)

RETENTION & PROGRESSION

It is important to recognise that retention and progression is just as important as recruitment. There may be a successful recruitment drive and an increase in the number of young Black men, but if they do not feel included or belong, they are unlikely to stay and the representation, especially in senior roles, will not change.

The employers contributing to this resource recognised the importance, but also highlighted some of the challenges.

Some employers, particularly in the tech sector, cited lack of progress in this area as a result of the small size of the organisation. Be the Business referenced this as a key issue for them.

Employers expressed an aspiration for introducing good practice around fast-tracking talented people. Mace, for example, has a commitment to develop talented people and intends to monitor progression by ethnicity and other protected characteristics.

Employers perceived this as a more complicated, next level activity. This resource and other support mechanisms can focus on innovative ways to address this area of work.

In order to strengthen and embed progression, some employers, including Jacobs and **Informatech**, are considering how they can use accountability and reward to build good practice into how teams are developed, their opportunities for progression, their sense of inclusion and wellbeing, potentially by using surveys.

At Balfour Beatty, it is using the diversity data collected in relation to promotion pools, to start talking about the diversity profile of those promotion pools to better understand the rationale and the impact of the decisions made in relation to identifying candidates for promotion.

Jacobs has dedicated champions within the business to help foster a sense of belonging to support its employee retention work. There is also a focus on identifying and supporting talented staff to progress to their full potential.

Mace has created a culture that helps employees feel that there are no limits to progression as long as they work hard.

Pay Equity

A conscious effort to review the ethnicity pay gap and level the playing field and provide fair opportunity for each employee needs to happen. Managers can source data to identify which employees are underpaid for similar roles or responsibilities.

For example, people analytics can help managers pinpoint any pay gaps that may exist within their team, and leaders can assess patterns within various departments to get to the root of underlying issues.

This insight can help identify patterns or trends that may exist where certain groups of employees like ethnic minorities, for example, are being underpaid within certain areas of the business.

LEADERSHIP

Successful initiatives are due to the senior leadership or executive team articulating and securing commitment to lead, influence and change the narrative around ED&I. This was reflected on some key messages from the employers contributing to this resource.

These include a global commitment to 'living inclusion' through the appointment of a global director responsible for ED&I and aligning strategic documents with international charters such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

At Jacobs, core values are embedded from the CEO downwards. Senior leadership (CEO) and board level commitment is shown through the chairing and sponsorship of employee networks across the entire organisation, UK and internationally, and at different levels.

A culture shift is needed through main-streaming and embedding of ED&I to facilitate change, through engagement with board members and senior leadership and disseminated to different levels of the organisation through 'Town Halls' and captured within their ED&I communications.

There is a lack of commitment in terms of lack of resources/investment or dedicated ED&I staff or relying on staff to do diversity and inclusion work on top of their existing roles. Where people undertake specific ED&I responsibilities informally in working hours it should be recognised formally.

ED&I should not be seen as a 'nice to have', but as a strategic imperative.

Good business practice should include a culture of meritocracy where 'the right person for the right job is the one that gets chosen'.

This means commitment demonstrated at board level with executive level sponsors for staff networks.

Culturally competent and diverse leaders will help make fair decisions. There is well-established evidence that diversity in teams leads to better decisions. Our decision makers should understand and reflect the diversity of staff, stakeholders, supply chains and consumer/service user.

CONSIDER THIS

Look at a transformational leadership style that incorporates emotional intelligence into how all people are engaged and valued.

A transformative leadership style encourages creativity, uses different ways of working, leads by example thereby offering a level of stimulation that inspires people to go 'over and above' basic job requirements.

TfL has targets for gender and BAME representation in relation to the apprenticeships scheme with targets of 20%. It has been successful in recruiting diverse groups onto the apprenticeship scheme, although gender has been more challenging at this level.

©Greater London Authority

DATA & TARGETS

ED&I data insights are critical for organisations to be able to drive a strategic approach for inclusion and measure change over time. This is across the organisation - recruitment and talent sourcing, employee life cycle; strategy, behaviours, governance, business processes, performance management, learning and development, leadership and communication and marketing.

The **Workforce Data Equality Guide** (2018) commissioned by the **Workforce Integration Network (WIN)** emphasised the importance of using data collection to be able to confidently act on the disparities facing under-represented people, such as young Black men, in relation to recruitment, retention and progression or experiences of racism, discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Data

It is important to capture and analyse diversity data to establish who those under-represented groups are in the organisation - in the type of job they hold, the opportunities for progression and representation at senior management or board level.

Collecting sensitive data can be difficult, especially with GDPR. However, by building trust and being transparent with what you are intending to do with the data, you are more likely to get the insights and predictive analytics you need to plan.

Targets

Our contributors spoke about the natural next step after collecting data — setting targets. They were able to set out what they want to achieve clearly and it became easier and justifiable to set targets that were stretching, and achievable for different under-represented groups.

Setting targets also helps with assessment of resources and capacity needed to see the change required.

Reflections from some of the employers indicated that the IET has helped to focus and reinforce companies by looking at data for not just young Black men, but the companies being intentional about Black talent.

Data to enable positive action

Many leaders are hesitant about Positive Action initiatives (which are legal).

What is Positive Action and when can you use it?

Positive action is the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs. The job is still given to the best candidate, regardless of whether they have a particular characteristic or not.

Using positive action is a choice the employer makes and the action must always be proportional to the need.

UK equality law allows positive action to be used in recruitment before or at the application stage. It is not the same as 'Positive Discrimination' or 'Affirmative Action', which are illegal.

An employer must demonstrate a need to make use of positive action. To do this the employer must have at least twelve months' of data indicating that particular groups of people are under-represented in a particular area of work.

The purpose of, and the need for, the initiative must be clearly communicated.

CONSIDER THIS

- Be clear and transparent. Prioritise and address the greatest concerns staff have regarding surveys and disclosure to achieve genuine transparency.
- Involve staff. Speak to staff to understand their greatest concerns around disclosure, while understanding behaviour.
- Remove barriers. Make the process of disclosure as easy as possible to reduce the burden on staff. Work with employees to identify key obstacles in the process.
- Use the data to improve ED&I. Identify key causes of inequality in the organisation and use this information to target and prioritise ED&I initiatives and evaluate how effective they have been.
- Use the Workforce Data Equality Guide.

Positive action can be used to encourage particular groups to apply, or to help people with protected characteristics to perform to the best of their ability, for example young Black men. This includes:

- Targeted advertising of jobs. This can involve using specific, but not exclusive, media to advertise jobs.
- Using positive action statements in recruitment adverts, for example stating that the employer welcomes applications from young Black men or a particular group.
- Offering pre-application training where this meets a need. For example, CV development or pre-interview test practice workshops targeting young Black men.
- Offering mentoring schemes.
- Participation in career fairs.
- Holding open days.
- Signing up to initiatives such as **10,000 Black Interns.**

VOICE

Almost all the organisations contributing to this resource have set up mechanisms to listen to the experiences of under-represented groups, for example, through listening sessions, affinity or working groups.

It is important to ensure these are resourced and are supported by a diversity champion or senior executive team. Recognise the time and emotional effort these groups can take, especially when these are voluntary roles.

Do not be complacent. Establishing this form of groups and positions post George Floyd and BLM became common. However ensuring there is a strategy and plan that feeds into the wider roadmap is essential. More importantly, ensure leadership teams actually listen to input from the groups or champions for genuine inclusion into the conversation. Think about a co-production approach.

VISIBILITY

There are multiple perspectives to consider in relation to visibility and ED&I.

Starting internally. Within your company, **think about how the messaging and communication is managed.** What are the messages in relation to the ED&I strategy? Who are they aimed at?

Quite often work is progressing in different corners of the organisation, if this is not communicated periodically, some employees cannot not see the progress being made and will question the intention versus the actions.

It is also important to lead by example. Encourage your managers to promote ED&I practice in every aspect of the work and delivery.

- What about leadership and governance?
- Is there representation, and if not, what initiatives are been tabled and communicated?
- Has any form of confirmation bias in leadership circles been managed by incorporating concepts such as Diversity of Thought?

Companies have been challenged when promoting ED&I when the senior leadership teams show no sign of been representative of the staff for local demographics.

Externally – review your marketing, branding and website content. Have the existing audiences been fully considered? What about the audiences and communities that are not currently engaging – do you know why they are not?

Education and Outreach

The importance placed on this by employers engaged in developing this resource is clear. Initiatives reaching out to the local community, including schools, colleges and careers advice services, are beginning to break down the barriers and stereotypes related to industries such as construction and technology.

IMPACT

How do you measure success to ensure the company's ED&I strategy is working?

When determining your key measures of success, it is important to understand what success looks like for your organisation or company and what your objectives are. A key to that is setting clear and realistic, qualitative and quantifiable targets.

It is also important to be clear and transparent about accountability. Who is responsible for implementing change at every stage of the strategy or roadmap?

For each area highlighted in your strategy, consider the RACI approach for accountability.

CONSIDER THIS

One size does not fit all. Regularly reflect on your strategy/roadmap and share what you find internally and even externally. This could include:

- Annual ED&I reports
- Review of ED&I charters and statements – keep them fresh
- Equal pay gap reports
- Staff survey results
- Diversity monitoring reports
- Case studies
- Good practice platforms

RESPONSIBLE	ACCOUNTABLE	CONSULTED	INFORMED
The people who do the work. They make the decisions and ensure the tasks are carried out. This would be the managers.

This can also be many people. | The person who owns the work and approves the way it will be carried out.

Only one person is responsible. | These are the people who must be consulted before anything is signed off or approved by the person who is accountable. | These are the people who need to be kept-up-to-date with the progress. |

THE CASE STUDIES

EMPLOYER ED&I JOURNEYS
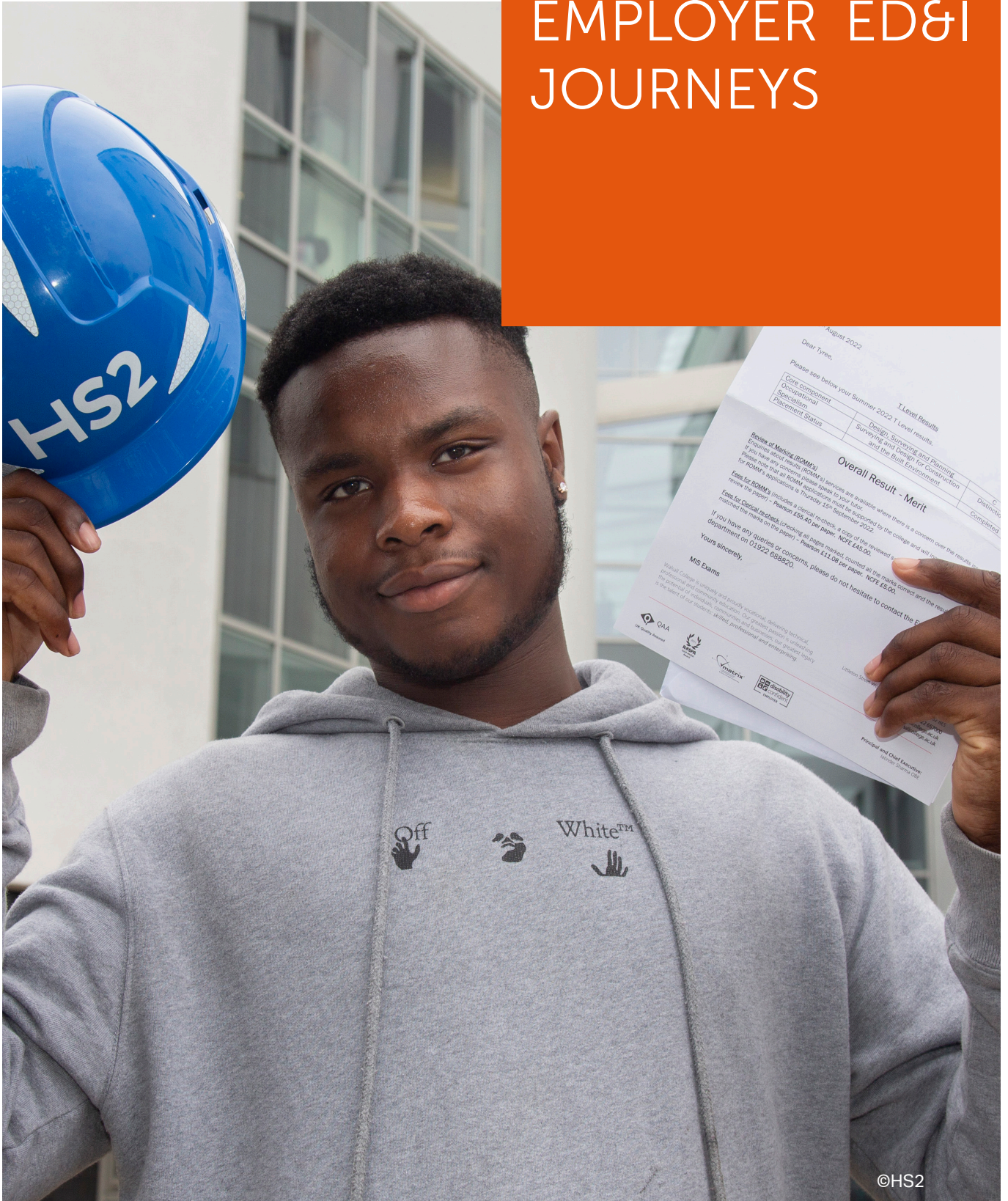
©HS2

PROFUSION
REPRESENTATION

"We should be inspiring school leavers from diverse communities at grassroots level to understand the jobs that are open in our sector and actually help influence their career choices."

Kevin Ronan, COO Profusion

Profusion is a Data Consulting agency that specialises in predictive modelling, email marketing, business intelligence and customer satisfaction. It aims to help businesses become more effective through the innovative application of data science.

Profusion also has wider ambitions to change the landscape of the digital sector. It has established a **Data Academy** to train the next generation of data scientists and engineers from under-represented groups and established **Profusion Cares**, a philanthropic foundation that supports local communities by helping charities and schools to use data for social impact. It offers work experience and opportunities to young people from under-represented backgrounds to support them into careers in tech.

The Journey so far

Diversity for Profusion is not just a moral imperative, it is also a commercial necessity.

The diversity of their workforce offers up a wide range of skills that enables Profusion to deliver great work for their clients. Profusion believes that diverse teams drive innovation and produce better data science.

The company also believes that diversity helps prevent unintentional bias in the algorithms they create. The Black Lives Matter movement was a catalyst for change and Profusion set up their diversity and inclusion working groups to have a more listening and action focused approach and to exchange ideas.

Profusion recognises the under-representation of people from diverse backgrounds, in particular young Black men in the tech and digital sectors and markedly in technical roles, such as programmers, IT support, data science, data engineering.

Commitment from leadership has been key to the changes at Profusion, with them deliberately keeping ED&I at the top of their leadership and company meeting agendas.

The focus and commitment from senior leadership is not just on increasing representation of BAME communities in the staff demographics, but also to establish a culture of belonging. It seeks to create an inclusive environment, focusing on education, conversations, and discussion, listening to and involving the whole workforce.

The Challenges

Profusion is relatively early on in its ED&I journey. It is only three years ago that diversity data started to be formally and purposefully collected on characteristics such as gender and sexuality. Prior to this, the approach was to 'take the best person for the job', but there was no evidence to prove that this was actually the case.

Profusion is a growing company. Staffing increased by 24% in 2020/21 and by a further 35% in 2021/22. By collecting data, Profusion was able to see significant disparities across all levels of the organisation.

With further projected growth, current small scale inclusion initiatives will become harder to sustain, and current limited human resources will restrict the pace and implementation of the company's strategic plan.

Profusion is reliant on artificial intelligence and data science to help give their customers and clients a competitive edge. However, the company recognises that AI can be inherently biased if those programming and creating algorithms themselves are subconsciously biased in the actions they take and the things that they do. Hence the need for a more diverse workforce.

It was clear that the recruitment pipeline related to policies and processes would need time to change and adapt to support this move.

The Approach

Profusion implemented several initiatives to create change and address the company's representational imbalance:

- It introduced gender balanced interview panels, that included diversifying the shortlisting, and interview panels to reflect gender, race and disability.
- The company recruited from much wider networks - actively placing job adverts in specialist websites and with community groups.
- It set out to de-bias the recruitment process; for example having name blind applications, not using CVs to make decisions, instead using cover letters, experience, and skills.
- Shortlisting panels were given training as they could no longer subconsciously make decisions based on a person's name, heritage, nationality, location, or previous job title.
- Profusion standardised the recruitment and selection process to use the same tasks, questions, presentations and briefs.
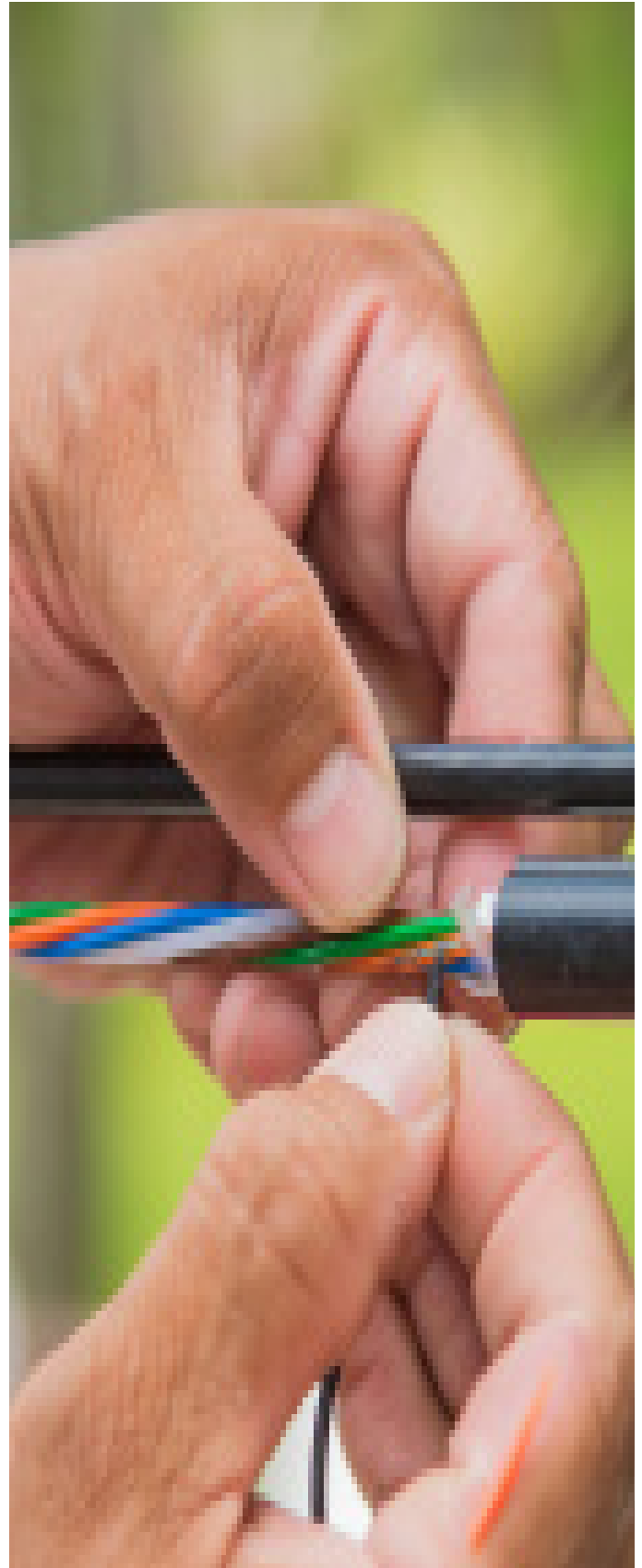
- Family friendly policies were enhanced, with initiatives such as offering unlimited annual leave to all staff.
- The website was reviewed by a diversity specialist to ensure a broader appeal. ED&I was linked to the career page celebrating Profusion's diversity and commitment to inclusion, while core inclusion statements ensured the messaging and approach was appealing to potential applicants.

Outcomes

Profusion has an international team with about 22 nationalities represented and over 30 different languages spoken, with an age range from 19 to 60.

Profusion's strategic plan will ensure that local plans, policies and work plans are aligned and will also link to the commercial strategy.

" …the small incremental changes, when you look back over a couple of years, have actually shifted the dial — not as much as we want. but in certain areas …"

Kevin Ronan, COO Profusion

There is an ambition to do more around cultural diversity and setting realistic ED&I targets beyond gender and to include ethnicity and young people.

However, the company has to note the demographics around the country and the social and economic landscape in certain locations which mean an aggregated target might not work. For example, the BAME demographics in London are different to some northern cities, or even the UK average.

How we move forward

ED&I strategies need to have a multi-pronged approach, including proactively promoting recruitment through specialist organisations, utilising initiatives such as the KickStarter scheme and engaging with schools.

- Recognise that the change and fruition will not happen overnight – this is part of a longer term strategy.
- A whole scale change in approach impacts everything - job adverts, language, images, challenging bias on panels, outreach.
- Take steps to de-bias the recruitment practice.
- Make sure that external facing channels highlight the commitment to ED&I.
- Review and ensure that the images and the content on the website are inclusive, encouraging and welcoming to different people.
- Check job descriptions are welcoming and open, making it clear through advertising that applications are welcome from people from diverse and different backgrounds.
- Think differently about how to recruit, where to advertise, for example diverse publications and websites, and consider how to open the person specification requirements for the job. Profusion does not require university experience or specific qualifications in its job descriptions and is open to the experience people bring, in whichever way they have gained it.
- Have an honest reflection – where are you and what can be done to increase diversity, equality, equity, inclusion and belonging.

- Dedicate time and resources.
- Consider zero tolerance, with clear performance evaluation methods aligned to ED&I

" If young people understand the offer early on - that this sector has a great offer - it's not only for 'nerds' and 'geeks', anyone can do this. It's not only for White boys sitting in the cellar, never seeing the sun - it's a normal job. This is basically the message that we're trying to send. So, we do understand that we need to start really early on with that messaging, to help people undertstand you do not need to do the job your parents did, because when they went to school there were no data scientists."

Kevin Ronan, COO Profusion

©Profusion

CLOUDREACH
RECRUITMENT

"We made changes to our job advert, to make it more open and inclusive. Instead of looking for unicorns and very specific profiles, we opened up ourselves in terms of what we were looking for. What's really important? What are a person's attributes that will do really well here? Everyone was judged on merit, and the recruitment went very well."

Poonam Flammarion, Head of Talent Academy

Cloudreach is the world's leading independent multi-cloud services company, operating in eight different countries. Established in 2009, Cloudreach helps enterprises build new foundations for future growth through successful cloud transformation. It is a strategic partner for Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud and Microsoft Azure.

The journey so far

An inclusive employer, one of Cloudreach's values is: 'Respect the individual', which encourages a workplace where diversity is celebrated and the individual is respected, included and empowered to bring their whole self to work.

Commitment from senior leadership has been key in ensuring a whole ED&I culture and systems change within Cloudreach, particularly in engagement and recruitment. This commitment has enabled a more confident approach to utilise positive action initiatives. These include support for training and increased sponsorship. Cloudreach is also setting up an internal talent acquisition project team around ED&I initiatives which will support change management across the organisation.

As part of its transformation, Cloudreach used the Inclusive Employers Toolkit, and found its approach comprehensive and

practical, as the resource offered ideas that they had not previously considered.

ED&I is an integral part of how Cloudreach defines success, and its values are embedded in the hiring process (especially for technical staff), leadership practice and business operation.

"I thought there were lots of really good suggestions in the IET, even simple things such as getting your recruiters to think about positive action, because people are very quick to start looking at positive discrimination."

Poonam Flammarion Head of Talent Academy

The Challenges

Cloudreach's main challenge was around the issues arising from setting recruitment targets.

While setting hiring targets for under-represented communities is the way forward, for many organisations it can bring with it an underlying fear of failure.

Historically, there is poor gender and ethnic representation in the tech sector, with a resultant lack of interest in the roles that should help companies bring about positive change. Cloudreach recognised the need to set realistic targets to manage the fear and also change 'hearts and minds' about the process.

Many organisations (and candidates) have faced an assumption that positive discrimination is used as a way to meet targets, which leads to doubt about the process, and the quality and merit of the candidates offered positions.

There is still an argument amongst many, that if businesses are not asking for sufficient experience and qualifications, the quality of appointments will not be as good. There can be a perception that those groups are

©Cloudreach

under-represented because the experienced talent in that community doesn't exist.

"It is easier to recruit through traditional channels so, given the need to recruit quickly, changing that process and thinking differently about how you recruit, then reaching out to under-represented groups is seen as more time-consuming. Changing mindsets about under-represented groups is a challenge and there is an initial hesitation that 'this person doesn't come from a traditional background, they don't have a tech degree, they don't have tech experience in the cloud'. We can show from the data that we had applications because of the diversity of our approach. It's not like we picked and chose Black candidates because that hits our target. We run a credible process."

Poonam Flammarion, Head of Talent Academy

The Approach

Cloudreach recognise that many groups and communities are under-represented in the tech sector, but has consciously decided to focus on recruiting young Black men aged 18-24, as this is the group which presents highly in unemployment statistics.

Cloudreach collaborated with Amazon Web Services to set up a Talent Academy to create a more diverse and inclusive technical community. It offers a two-year programme of accelerated, hands-on learning to help candidates from diverse communities launch their technical career in cloud computing.

The application process was opened to a wider demographic, which was not constrained by specialist experience, qualifications or skills. The first cohort of 20 people were recruited in 2021.

"Unless you've got a very specific issue that has been identified and everybody agrees with it, the male-female ratio is a very obvious one and something that people generally feel comfortable talking about. But when you talk about people of colour, ethnicity or other things, people suddenly don't feel that it is their place to talk about it."

Poonam Flammarion, Head of Talent Academy

The Cloudreach Talent Academy has a clearly defined progression pathway for this entry level programme. The trainees take a number of challenging AWS certifications and start working directly with customers to help them gain as much experience as possible. Support is provided by trainers, mentors, line managers and by more experienced members of their project teams.

Outcomes

Cloudreach has achieved success with its wide-reaching approach. Of the first Talent Academy intake, 54% of applicants declared themselves as non-white. (96% of applicants declared their ethnicity).

From lessons learned during the first cohort process, Cloudreach expanded its recruitment to work with grassroots non-profit organisations to reach talent, with good results.

Cloudreach was able to evidence the successful impact of its new approach, which showed positive client feedback, including good reviews about complementary skills which have enhanced the workplace, clients' willingness to have the trainees on their projects and for the trainees to become billable. Cloudreach was also able to evidence improved understanding of the barriers and experiences under-represented groups face.

"I think the mindset is starting to change, because people are now saying, yes the talent does exist – you're just not looking in the right place".
Young Black male

Internally, a major benefit of the increased communications of ED&I initiatives has been positive employee engagement. The Cloudreach CEO already meets with the trainees regularly. Staff are now engaging with the process by offering to mentor trainees and volunteering for interview panels. Results from the staff survey also reveal that colleagues appreciate the work that is being done in relation to ED&I.

"At launch events, a trainee will often talk about the difference this opportunity has made to them and how grateful they feel. They are able to share their stories to promote understanding of the barriers facing BAME young people, such as not expecting a call back because of their colour or because they wear a headscarf or hijab."
Poonam Flammarion, Head of Talent Academy

Looking Ahead

Cloudreach is adding to its ED&I policies for the whole organisation. The new Head of Talent will develop and utilise positive action initiatives. There are set targets for recruiting young Black men aged 16-24 years. To attract talent, it has reached out to a wider, more diverse audience by adopting a more open recruitment approach for other posts within the organisation, not just the Talent Academy. It will also start to review retention data.

How to move forward

- Think outside the box and challenge the norms we inherit regarding recruitment.
- Create safe spaces to talk about 'difficult' topics of race and racism to help improve the understanding of the barriers and experiences of under-represented groups, such as young Black men.
- Look at the data. Look around you. Who is missing?

- Don't be afraid to use positive action initiatives to progress your ED&I goals.
- Reach out! Through non-profits or agencies that work with under-represented groups. Or publications that increase your reach. Social media can also help to generate and dramatically increase responses from a wider, more diverse candidate pool
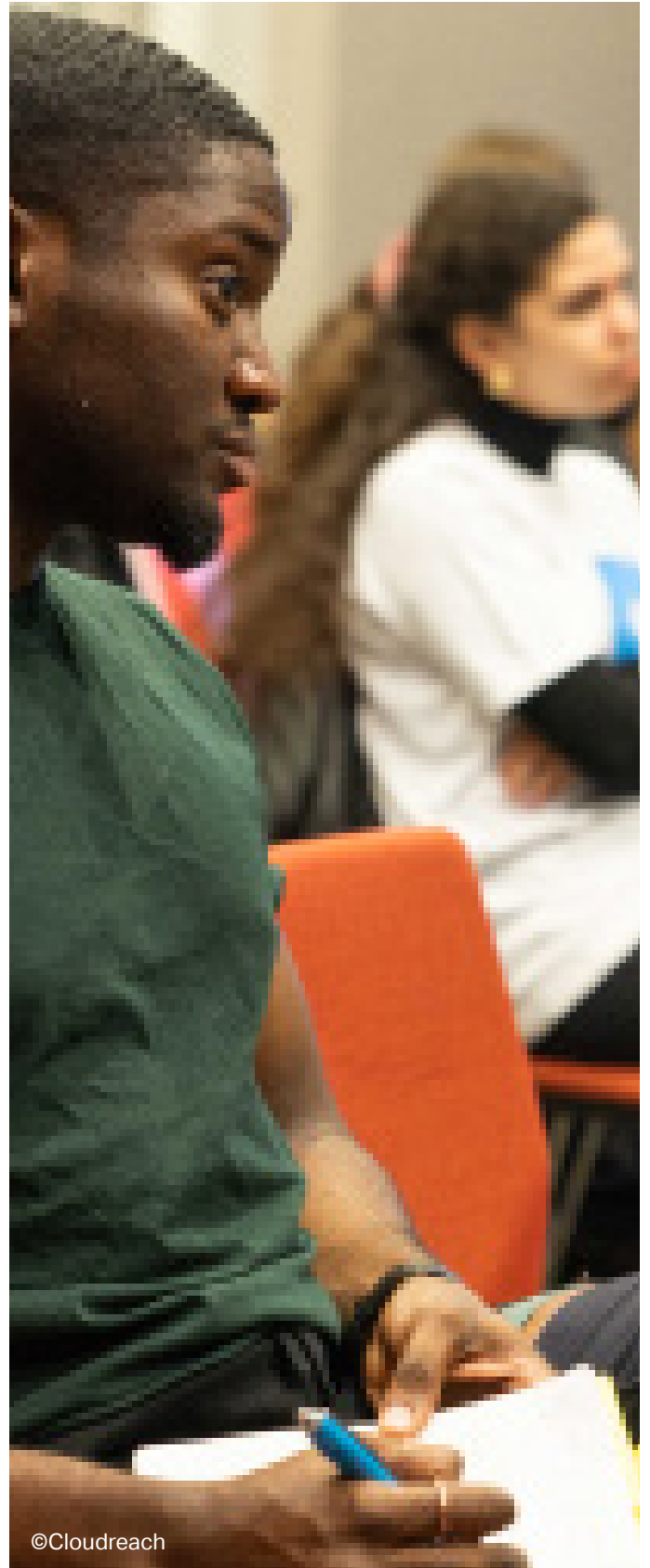
©Cloudreach

JACOBS
CULTURE & LEADERSHIP

"We had already made [ED&I] commitments in our Advancing Justice and Equality Charter at a very high level and then embedded them in the company, as part of our Plan Beyond strategy. For me, the Inclusive Employers Toolkit actually kind of walked us through a process of helping us to bring the Charter to life."

Rebecca Scott, Global Talent Resources

Jacobs Engineering Group is an international technical professional services firm specialising in engineering, technical, professional and construction services. With a workforce of 55,000 employees, operating in over 40 countries worldwide, the organisation has achieved global recognition for its inclusion work.

In 2021, it was named one of the **Times Top 50 Employers for Women**, **UK inspirational STEM Employer of the year** by UK Research and Innovation, and the best place to work for LGBTQ equality by Human Rights Campaign.

Jacobs believes that inclusion is about acting in an open and transparent way and by ensuring the foundation on which all their brands are built is from a culture of caring. It has recently published a European Inclusion and Diversity report called 'Together Beyond' which sets out its commitment to embedding inclusion in every aspect of their business.

The journey so far

For Jacobs, ED&I is all about 'Living Inclusion' and to achieve this, engagement and communication with employees is paramount. The belief is that building relationships, building trust and encouraging staff to genuinely 'bring your whole self to work' helps staff feel they belong.

The culture of caring at the company was particularly noticeable during the global pandemic and with the way that it evolved and supported colleagues with mental health and wellbeing.

This culture extends to the investments made to the employee network and the inclusion and belonging commitment of its Advancing Justice and Equality Charter.

Jacobs is also taking deliberate steps to globally diversify its supply chain. Last year the company's Supplier Diversity Programme spent over $1.3 billion (approx. £1 billion) on diverse suppliers worldwide.

In the UK, a raft of new initiatives are in the pipeline, including a supplier diversity awareness event, supply chain mentoring scheme and corporate membership of an umbrella body dedicated to supporting BAME SMEs' partnerships with large corporations.

The Inclusive Employers Toolkit supported the company through the process of helping to bring the Advancing Justice and Equality Charter to life, including establishing internal employee networks that have been championed and sponsored by senior leadership throughout the company.

The Challenges

With a large international staff, the company had to meet the challenge of translating the ED&I commitments through the 7,000 managers and leaders consistently on a global scale.

There was also the responsibility of ensuring that all staff felt comfortable and safe disclosing information through employee surveys. Although internal reviews and KPIs are set, Jacobs needed to share and showcase with, and hear good practice from, other like-minded people and companies.

Jacobs

The Approach

Through working with the GLA group, Jacobs been able to support the focus on employment opportunities for young Black men. By looking at data for young Black men in London and in the construction industry, Jacobs is now reviewing how its own data is collected and used.

Working with the GLA group has also given Jacobs the opportunity to talk about initiatives and good practice with other businesses going on a similar journey, covering topics such as supply chains, outreach and engagement methods and communication strategies.

Leading by example is another area that Jacobs has been able to highlight. All of the senior leaders in the company are required to sponsor and mentor two diverse employees, one of whom must be Black.

The company is also encouraging all staff to be visible and vocal. The CEO wants ED&I to be talked about widely, including with clients and highlighted in published information. This includes publishing the results from staff surveys and openness in the company's gender and ethnicity pay gap reports.

The Outcomes

Central to the 'Living Inclusion' commitment is the **Advancing Justice & Equality Charter.** Jacobs has now developed an action plan to ensure that all Black employees have the resources they need to advance and achieve their highest goals.

Jacobs has also developed and communicated a strong visible inclusion and diversity strategy **'Together Beyond'**, with a Leadership Commitment and Accountability Statement that has been signed by all senior leadership within the business.

The numerous employee networks are championed and sponsored by senior leadership throughout every country. Learning, issues raised and messaging from the employee networks is vital in understanding practical and realistic inclusion practices that make a difference to staff at every level.

Jacobs defines itself as a learning organisation. Under the ED&I banner, training in unconscious bias was followed by conscious inclusion training (which 99% of the company staff participated). This was then followed by ally and bystander training.

The employee networks played a key role in sourcing the training and ensuring the content was relevant. The training produced additional outcomes, as it helped people to understand and appreciate that people communicate and learn with each other in a range of formats and styles and can enable courageous conversations where people are able to share their lived experience. Through the training, Jacobs was able to reinforce the feeling of belonging for staff.

How to move forward

- Start from the top with senior leadership. Ensure clear and visible commitment to any inclusion and diversity strategy.
- Lead by example. Such as, senior leaders taking on sponsored mentoring
- Collect and understand your data. This will inform your plans and reinforce senior leadership commitment.
- Have a person-centred approach that naturally leads to 'belonging' in a company.

- Identify opportunities with similar external companies to showcase and talk about your initiatives and good practice. Use each other as a critical friend.
- Employee Champion groups can only have power and impact if championed and sponsored by senior leadership.
- Be visible and vocal about your ED&I work. People/staff will understand there are numerous ways to be inclusive and different ways to be an ally.
- Support and champion inclusion.

"I want to stay at Jacobs. Within the last three months, I've received immense support from my line manager and colleagues. Since I started, I've had a mentor who's championing and helping to shape my career, I have regular 'catch-ups' with my line manager and we have discussed my career plans; we've set targets and are working on them.

There are endless opportunities and support here, definitely, I see myself staying at the company and believe I can develop my career here."

James Kamara, Civil Engineer

HS2 LTD
BALFOUR BEATTY VINCI SYSTRA JOINT VENTURE
SUPPLY CHAINS & ENGAGEMENT

Credit: Jeremy de Souza

"There are seven strategic goals across the HS2 project, and one of those is skills and employment, with an extended reach out to ED&I. The skills and employment goal is ensuring that opportunities are accessible to people from local communities and diverse groups. In doing so, HS2 will be delivered in a way that acts as a catalyst for economic growth and delivers substantial legacy benefits."

Ambrose Quashie, Skills Manager, HS2 Ltd

High Speed Two (HS2) is the Government's scheme for a new, high speed north-south railway, which is being taken forward in a number of phases. HS2 Ltd is the non-departmental public body responsible for managing the development and delivery of the scheme.

The company works under the terms of a Development Agreement entered into with the Secretary of State for Transport. As such, HS2 Ltd is bound by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The journey so far

HS2's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy and Skills, Employment and Education (SEE) strategy applies to all functions of HS2 Ltd and the supply chain, including the planning, design, construction and operation of the proposed scheme.

The ED&I strategy and SEE strategy are overseen by the Legacy team within HS2 Ltd, with implementation and performance managed through HS2 Ltd's management systems. Relevant delivery by the supply chain is achieved through contractual requirements set by HS2 Ltd.

"In many organisations, ED&I can be seen as being solely part of corporate social responsibility initiatives, whereas with HS2 it is very much seen as core business activity."

Ambrose Quashie, Skills Manager, HS2 Ltd

The Challenges

Around 34,000 people will need to be recruited to help design and build HS2 at peak construction. Alongside this is the ambition to recruit at least 2,000 new apprentices across the whole project.

HS2 Ltd and its supply chain recognise the scale of the task and the challenge in filling these roles against the backdrop of a tight labour market, as well as sector specific issues, such as an ageing workforce, lack of diversity and the increasing demand for people with high level skills.

There are currently 27,000 people working, primarily in the supply chain, to design and build HS2, so there is an opportunity to really embed ED&I throughout the supply chain and, in doing so, deliver benefits for the wider industry.

There are also negative perceptions and stereotypes associated with the construction industry throughout society, including within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities that need to be challenged and changed.

HS2 Ltd and its supply chain are keen to secure better representation across the workforce and is striving to overcome some of the challenges. For example, what is the best way of engaging with under-represented groups of people? How do we create the right pathways into employment? How do we provide opportunities for people to progress, once in employment, so that they can thrive and be successful.

In pursuit of overcoming these challenges, HS2 Ltd supports its supply chain partners to establish the infrastructure, capacity, resources and expertise to open up the pathways into employment for under-represented groups. This is done in a way that recognises each company will be at a different stage in their respective ED&I journey, and therefore have access to varying levels of resources and capacity.

The Approach

HS2 uses its contractual leverage to drive the ED&I agenda. ED&I is embedded into every stage of the procurement process, from pre-qualification questionnaires and invitations to tender to project mobilisation, and is then a key part of contract management.

As an example, for every £3 million of contract value, there is a contractual requirement for all major suppliers to deliver one SEE activity and this helps to support creating a more diverse workforce.

These outputs include commitments around: creating apprenticeships; employing previously unemployed individuals; creating work placements to act as a pathway into paid employment; working with schools and further education colleges to deliver careers support; and developing initiatives to upskill the existing workforce. With contracts running collectively into billions of pounds, this amounts to significant delivery of SEE activities.

In addition, ED&I contractual performance measures are established that cover: policies and procedures; recruitment; workforce monitoring and reporting; supplier diversity; training; and a requirement to obtain an externally-verified ED&I standard.

As part of the governance and assurance process, Tier 1 suppliers are held to account on their performance, and they, in turn, do the same for their sub-contractors.

"It's about culture change. We have baked the contractual requirements into the contracts with our suppliers, so we expect them to deliver to the same standard we deliver at HS2. It's also about collaboration and saying to suppliers that we are on this journey together. We haven't necessarily got it right, we haven't got all the answers, but let's work together on this."

Alpa Kapasi, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Balfour Beatty Vinci Systra JV

The collective contracts amount to billions, resulting in significant inclusion activity amongst the partners. Monitoring can identify trends and gaps in relation to geography and demographics and enable the review of projected engagement plans.

Outcomes

HS2 Ltd launched its Job Brokerage Scheme in 2021. The scheme has two main components.

A Jobs Board that sits on the HS2 website where job seekers, learners and stakeholders can access vacancies that are available from across the tier one supply chain.

A network of Job Brokerage Partners, organisations that have got the expertise and capacity to support under-represented people into employment, with the focus being on matching under-represented groups of people supported by Job Brokerage Partners to HS2 employment opportunities.

To date, over 2,200 previously unemployed people have secured employment for at least 26 weeks and over 950 new apprenticeships have been created.

This approach is having a significant impact with workforce diversity performance across the HS2 project exceeding industry averages. For example, 18% of the HS2 supply chain workforce is comprised of people from ethnic minority communities, compared to the construction industry average of 5%.

How to move forward

- Diversify the supply chain, but also question the ED&I practices of your existing suppliers.
- Embed ED&I into contractual requirements and make it non-negotiable.
- Reach out to and utilise specialist reputable organisations with lived experience.
- Sign up to the Race Work Charter.
- Invest in staff training across the organisation. Keep it ongoing and embed in any induction or onboarding schemes.
- Make the training relevant by including on-site scenarios. Engage people in conversations.
- Build your strategy from data. This will essentially determine how and where you recruit

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING BOARD (CITB)
ENGAGEMENT & RECRUITMENT

"As the Construction Industry Training Board, we have to be a beacon of change. We can't just say, 'all we do is training'. We also have to influence in the right way and we are using our platform to show best practice."

Stephen Cole, Senior Customer Engagement Manager, CITB

The CITB is the industry training board for the construction sector in England, Scotland, and Wales. It's the organisation's job to help the construction industry attract talent, work with employers to create and fund opportunities and support skills development, to build a better Britain. It is funded through a levy on the construction sector and sponsored by the Department for Education.

The CITB has a values-based approach, seeking to act as a role model for good practice. ED&I training is mandatory for all CITB staff, as is training on Fairness Inclusion and Respect (FIR). The CITB's commitment goes beyond compliance as the organisation wants to do everything it can to embed ED&I to support a more inclusive workforce within the sector.

The journey so far

The CITB is introducing a programme of tasters and work experience activities that allow employers and the CITB to work together to enable learners to access and experience opportunities.

The London Construction Taster programme is introduced by a virtual taster with presentations and Q&As, followed by a second session providing learners with a structured workplace-based experience.

One of the benefits of this programme is that it enables those who don't have the 'social capital' to gain knowledge of the industry. It provides visibility of opportunities, such as apprenticeships, as it seeks to appeal to more young people. Its strategy of visibility of the sector is crucial and the CITB actively promotes the industry within schools and at career events through its STEM Ambassador programme.

The Challenges

Negative perceptions about the industry can hamper efforts to attract and engage young people to work in the sector. CITB research highlighted some of the reasons why young people weren't interested in a construction career, such as it being low skilled, low paid and low tech.

However, the evidence indicates the opposite; that there are many opportunities for career progression and high pay. The CITB wants to try to reshape that perception through its engagement strategy and through adopting a problem-solving approach to some of the challenges for employers and for people coming into the sector.

The recruitment process within the industry can present a challenge. The industry itself is used to recruiting or prefers recruiting informally, which often does not lend itself to a diverse workforce.

The overall makeup of the industry, particularly on site and at management levels, tends to be White and male. So, continuing to hire informally is more likely to result in forms of affinity bias "by default, recruiting more of the same".

One particular finding from a benchmarking exercise by Network Rail, TfL and others across the construction industry last year, was the number of times, compared to the broader population, someone from an ethnic minority background had to apply in order to get an interview — 49:1. However, once they reached the interview stage they performed well.

The Approach

Historically, one of the main activities that has worked well in the CITB national network to attract people to the construction sector is the 'Open Doors' scheme, where employers open up their sites for a week and invite people in to find out more about the opportunities within the industry.

However, it became clear that more headway could be made if there were engagement interventions and activities throughout the year.

The CITB recently supported the launch of the Fairness, Inclusion and Respect Growth Assessment Tool, which brings together the existing BeFaIR accreditation with a streamlined self-assessment tool that all employers can engage with. The CITB will create an action plan based on the responses.

The CITB's strategy funds projects around employability. The CITB works in partnership with CSF hubs and others to support confidence building, communication skills, emotional intelligence, the importance of reliability and work ethic.

Outcomes

The CITB has developed a digital portal called 'Talent View' which employers can use to advertise and promote their vacancies and other work opportunities.

An 'Inclusive Recruitment' course has been developed by the CITB to support employers to remove potential bias within their practices and to help them make their recruitment practice more inclusive.

The CITB supports the Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) project, which is led by the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, and delivered through an online portal, the Supply Chain Sustainability School. It's a learning management system with a library of resources which are free for all members.

The ambition is that people complete the courses, become FIR Ambassadors and over time, the sector will start to see positive shifts in recruitment practice, language and culture.'

One opportunity the CITB is progressing is to embed FIR into all of its standards. So, every person who comes into the industry at some point in the future will have access to learning and training in these areas.

Through the Construction STEM Ambassador Programme, Ambassadors act as advocates and attend schools and career events promoting the industry's commitment to FIR.

The CITB aims to develop this programme to incorporate a 'role modelling' approach. It is important for local communities and young people to identify with the people representing different sectors and careers, so that they can see themselves reflected in a wider range of

subjects and careers that are open to them. The CITB is part of the City of London's Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, which aims to ensure London's commercial built environment has the skills it needs within the context of the green skills revolution, a significant skills shortage and a need for increased diversity.

There is an opportunity for employers to get in touch with CITB to explore partnership working to co-create solutions to the challenges facing London's construction skills landscape.

How to move forward

- Thinking differently about how the industry engages, recruits, and retains staff is a key step.

- Reach out to young people in secondary schools who are making career choices.

- Work with partners so there are agreed and shared communication channels to ensure that opportunities are visible and accessible to a wider audience.

- More and better collaboration, sharing existing resources and connecting employers who want to further their ED&I journey.

- Link up with creative initiatives and good practice guidance within the Inclusive Employers Toolkit

- Become a FIR Ambassador, become a Go Construct STEM Ambassador, join CITB's ED&I group in London.

- Take part in the diversity benchmarking exercise and open your businesses and sites so that London's under-represented groups can participate in meaningful work experience.

"We (construction) had skills shortages before Covid, The pandemic happened, and that skills shortage has increased, and will continue unless we recruit from a much broader talent pool. We need to change our behaviours and our practices, so it's very much about looking at how we support that. There is good momentum and we need to keep pushing on to make sure ED&I is fully adopted across the board."

Stephen Cole, Senior Customer Engagement Manager, CITB

THE CASE STUDIES

STORIES FROM YOUNG BLACK MEN

The stories on the following pages follow the journey a few Young Black Men have made, and are making, towards fulfilling careers in construction, digital and technology.

In their own words, they talk about the steps they have taken themselves, and the help they have received on the way.

They show the impact of some of the interventions employers have made on Young Black Men, and the value they bring to the workplace.

KEON SIMMS
SENIOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGER, MACE

©Luke Agbaimoni

I'm from a single parent background. My mum is unable to work and so I had to take responsibility for the family, which includes my two younger brothers, are dependent on me). And so the luxury of university was a far-fetched ideology. I had to find ways to support my studies, found out about scholarships, spoke to church groups and got assistance for basic things like books and figuring out about food. It's been a tough journey, but well worth it in terms of character development and resilience. I had to maintain an average yearly grade point for my scholarship, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford university. I came out with a degree in Operations and Finance, just a few points below a first class honours.

CAREER

I landed my first official job in tourism operations management and then went into utilities management for the NHS and did additional studies in project management and finance.

I found out about the possibilities in construction through the GLA Workforce Integration Network and the Equal Group. I'm just happy that I got the chance to elevate and I'm lucky enough to work on major projects like HS2.

I'm in a position where there is real potential for meaningful career growth and impact. I feel like I'm now in a place that is prosperous and fulfilling. Just being in this position now, I have confidence that I'll be able to help my family more, so it doesn't just benefit me.

Everything has been much greater than my expectations, in terms of scope, the impact of the company on society and what I am doing. There's that feeling of pride, drive, and the desire to perform for the company and have that mutual growth.

RECRUITMENT

I've never been laidback when it comes to hunting for opportunities. I'm constantly researching, checking things out, scrolling through LinkedIn and associated job network sites trying find opportunities. I came across an Equal Group online event and it was literally, mind blown!

It does take time to get an application together, to personalise your CV to tailor it to the particular job and the particular company that you're interested in, and then in most cases, you don't get a response. Even if you do, in some situations, there's usually no feedback and you're just left in darkness.

I did receive permanent offers for other roles before I had confirmation from Jacobs. But just because of the communication that I

had with the Jacobs team, I was willing to let those initial offers or confirmed offers wither wait or go by because I was convinced that whatever the outcome, it would be worth it waiting to see what was going to happen with Jacobs.

I was totally unaware of what Jacobs did. So, I researched the company. There were a lot of favourable points that caught my eye. Social responsibility, their hyper integrity, inclusivity and ethics, and values that resonated strongly with me. I checked sites like Glassdoor and LinkedIn and viewed feedback from current employees.

The information gave some insight into the culture of the company and I'm glad to say that I feel at ease. Jacobs basically lives inclusion, which is one of its four core values.

I love my hair, but I've always tried to fit within the box of what's expected, by keeping a very low cut. But, as long as it's neat and professional, I just felt that Jacobs would accept me like this, and I could see others as well in media, online in photos, which gave me confidence. It's just one of those small things that, I feel, is a product of their culture of inclusivity; allowing people to be comfortable with who they are and feeling part of Jacobs, as they are.

ED&I

At Jacobs, there's a great investment in time and resources, especially in the staff networks, which are all well supported. The commitment to the entire ecosystem is absolutely phenomenal. I've never seen anything like it. And there's visibility in support. So, the CEO supports, talks about it and filters it down to management right down to staff level. That speaks to the commitment.

Jacobs has made it clear that the interest is there for the advancement of minority groups. There is also inclusivity around gender equality, LTBQ+, disability, health and wellbeing and the intersectionality of these.

The induction allyship and bystander training opened my eyes a lot more to what it means to be inclusive and to embrace diversity on a wider scale.

The definition of what ED&I looks like is clearly defined within the Global Action Plan for Advancing Justice and Equality. It's not just a document, it's about tangibility and measurable metrics. It's not just about bringing people from the minority or disadvantaged backgrounds in, it's about progression and retention and support.

There are other programmes such as BeyondZero, which is about health and wellbeing and TogetherBeyond, which focuses on inclusivity and diversity.

The company runs events called 'Courageous Conversations', where staff come together and speak freely about their lived experiences and people actually listen and learn from these experiences.

I have been to the women's network where I've heard and learnt from women talking about experiences they've had, the comments that they've had to deal with so there is sensitisation to issues.

OPPORTUNITIES

Are the opportunities open to everyone? That's a big 'Yes'. I feel like I've literally jumped right out of the statistics from the Inclusive Employers Toolkit (IET). I'd never been able to get out of the low pay, low opportunity scenario, which has been depressing.

I would like to see more events to get involvement, including more workshops, because it's evident that this is a way to reach people. It's about awareness, because minority groups may not realise all the opportunities available within the company.

I was unaware of who Jacobs was, unaware of the opportunities in construction and how that tied to my desire for a project management and finance career.

I want to be part of something that helps others in the same position, especially contributing to uplifting the black community.

I'm currently involved in the preparation and production of materials aimed at increasing visibility and membership in black networks. I have also signed up to volunteer for activities like school outreach.

PROGRESSION

I've been really surprised at how quickly I was able to get into an area that I wanted to get into. I'm confident that even if I think of a career change, this company will be able to facilitate that as it has an 'agile career' concept, where you can choose, and be supported with, whatever direction you want to go in. There are career coaches, and regular contact with line managers to find out where you are, what your progress is, where you want to go and how you're progressing towards that.

I'm just happy that I got the opportunity to elevate, that I'm in a position where I feel there is potential for progression and to do something that's meaningful. As long as I keep my focus and keep working hard, there is true opportunity for growth.

ERIC NYAMEKE
SENIOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGER, MACE

©Luke Agbaimoni

My career has been very organic. I started as a civil engineering graduate and was sponsored through university, so walked straight into a job and worked my way up through the ranks. Now I'm a site production manager at Mace, only the second company I've worked for.

CAREER

I've worked on some really large-scale flagship projects, including Heathrow Terminal 5, BBC Television Centre in White City and recently Battersea Power station, which is one of the largest developments in Europe. I grew up in Battersea, so I had an emotional affiliation to the place.

I've been at Mace for eight years now. I went through a kind of graduate management programme where you rotate around the organisation and take on various roles, which has helped me make an informed decision as to what I wanted to do in my later career.

Mace has a number of structured training programmes at various levels of the business, If you show the right kind of aspirations and skill sets and a desire for a senior position in the business, opportunities are there for all.

My career goals are dynamic and change as I gain more and more experience. If you'd asked me five years ago, I probably would have said that my end goal would be the position I'm in now. But I'm continuing to improve, so why should that be my end goal? Director level for sure is now my current target and if I could get onto the Board one day, then fantastic, why not?

Although we're a massively diverse company, that pendulum sways towards White males as you go up the company - to directors and board members. So I think if we can get that balance a bit better, the dream would be more realistic for people like myself trying to get up in the business. More representation in senior roles is very important because what people see, they believe.

CULTURE

When I started in construction, I was a bit lost because I come from an ethnic background where the language is slightly different, the slang is different and I struggled a lot with adapting to that setting. I felt like I didn't belong.

When I went outside of work with my friends, I spoke differently to them because I was kind of going through this transition period. As silly as it sounds, its these subtle things that need to be captured.

It goes into cultures of Black and ethnic minority people. What we want our kids to get into. I remember when I was choosing my educational selections talking with my cousins and friends, most of them were steered towards medicine, accountancy and law. Construction wasn't on the agenda. And why is that?

I assume it's because our parents didn't see us in this type of organisation. There's also a stigma around it — like it's low paid or dirty work. Why would they push their children into that environment?

It's not true at all. I wear a suit to work now that I'm in interiors. I haven't always worn a suit, but it's not a dirty environment at all. Just changing these kinds of stigmas is a massive step in the right direction.

There is a space for law and accountancy within construction and the built environment — so it's about changing that narrative. When I speak to my White peers they say, 'well, my dad did it and I went to work for the weekend with my dad one day'.

A lot of people from my kind of culture and background don't get that opportunity; their parents aren't taking them to construction sites and showing them the ropes and showing them the light. It doesn't happen.

So, there's less interest from a young age. I have two children and I have made a conscious effort to show them that it's a good opportunity, especially for young Black women — they're crying out for that demographic.

INCLUSIVITY AND ED&I

Eight years is a long time to be with a company and as it stands now, I can see myself staying with Mace because it's at the forefront of construction and consultancy. I would describe Mace as 100% an inclusive company.

It's diverse and welcoming and I feel like I belong here. We have a number of networks that have been set up to represent people from marginalised backgrounds, including LGBTQ+, parents, military. I co-chair the Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion network.

There's a culture of meritocracy where the right person for the job is allocated the role. It's a very transparent open company where there's an ability to create safe spaces, to be able to speak and voice opinions and share and exchange views and help you debate.

ED&I is something that we speak about on a day-to-day basis. You see it all over our ntranet, all over our comms. You have safety moments, you have training. It's a culture thing. It's the way how we live now. It's at the forefront of every decision we make.

Off the back of #MeToo and the Black Lives Matter movement I think diversity and inclusion within the business has been more of a priority.

Like many organisations, I think it's always been at the core of the business, but now it's definitely more apparent. We have recently won accolades and awards, being recognised for that industry wide. So, I think that speaks for itself.

ENGAGEMENT

Changing the narrative about the way the construction industry is viewed needs to start way before companies and organisations are hiring people. Again, it's that image of it being low paid, dirty work.

Construction companies need to go to parent evenings, career open days to show that construction is a wider opportunity for young people. My older brother is a lawyer, my middle brother is an engineer, and I am a civil engineer and that kind of expectation, that bar was set high from a young age, similar to my peers.

We do a lot of engagement with schools and I've been part of that in recent years, but engagement with parents is something we're working on.

I enjoy focusing on interiors, so I have every desire to stay within the company. I think that's important because a lot of companies do a lot to recruit people from ethnic minority backgrounds, but there's not as much focus on retention. Mace do that.

My career has been so blessed and my opportunities have been too. Provided I deliver the world is my oyster. But it's not just about opportunities, it's about how you seize those opportunities.

JAMES KAMARA
CIVIL ENGINEER, JACOBS

©Luke Agbaimoni

I became a civil engineer to create a positive impact in society. Civil engineering is broad; you can be engaged in different aspects and every project is geared towards improving the lives of others, whether it's water, structures, or transportation.

I recently completed my Masters in Water Engineering at Brunel University. I mean, we all know that water is life, we can't live without it, so I pursued that degree to gain the requisite skills and knowledge to make the necessary changes in society and improve the lives of others by ensuring people receive an adequate water supply.

I work in the Major Programmes and Projects Group as an Assistant Project Manager on the HS2, Engineering Delivery Partner.

CAREER

During my career, I've worked as a regulator to ensure overseas water companies provide quality service to consumers, by promoting licensing applications and monitoring compliance; been involved in the Results-Based Financing project, a $5 million project funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation and worked as a consultant where I got involved in the £38 million Rehabilitation of Freetown Water Supply, one of the biggest water projects in Sierra Leone.

I gained significant experience during the feasibility design stages of the project. I assisted in the design of new networks, pipeline route and hydraulic design, and produced the stage 2 deliverable drawings.

Jacobs is very intentional about bringing Black talent on board. I could tell that the company was not interested just to tick a box. I wanted to join a company where I can utilise my skills whilst improving and building my professional career and I see that with Jacobs. This a place I'll thrive, learn and grow.

I also joined Jacobs because of the impact of Harambee, the Black employee network. They collaborated with Equal, as part of the GLA Mayor of London Workforce Initiative project, on a three-day recruitment drive to showcase opportunities in the construction industry for young Black men. That's how I learned about a specific role created at Jacobs.

Two interviews and a psychometric test later, here I am, working for a company like no other, creating a more connected, sustainable world.

OPPORTUNITIES

HS2 is the biggest infrastructure project in Europe which is going to increase capacity, reduce carbon and create better connectivity across the UK. To be involved at this point in my career is really huge.

The key thing for me is that it's a stepping stone. Jacobs has lots of opportunities, there are many projects to be involved with to utilise my skills. I don't want to become stagnant doing one thing from the start of my career to the end. The good thing is Jacobs wants employees to have different careers within the company.

Jacobs has appointed career partners and with Agile careers, it showcases and highlights internal opportunities with colleagues which support up-scaling and reskilling. It's not just about recruiting talent; it's about retaining and progressing talent within the company.

When I started I asked people how long they've been with the company. Apart from the graduates, most of them said; *'Oh, five, ten, 20 years'*. I want to be that person.

Since I started a few months ago, I have a mentor who's championing and helping to shape my career, I have regular 'catch-ups' with my line manager and we have set targets and discussed my career plans.

ED&I

It's good to work within a diverse community. During my onboarding I took part in conscious inclusion and advocate and ally training. It's not just about respect, it's about acceptance. 'We live inclusion' is a Jacobs value and there's huge commitment to ED&I. The organisation values health and safety, positive mental health, inclusion and belonging for all employees.

Everyone is accepted for who they are, supported and treated equally, and this is reflected in the Global Employee Networks There are eight employee networks — I'm a member of seven — that play a critical role in fostering the company's culture of caring in the work it does, and which is centred around offering employees an opportunity to collaborate with others around the world.

Jacobs' purpose is to create a more connected, sustainable world. All the employee networks have a senior executive sponsor to provide advocacy, guidance and support. The management really takes the responses very seriously and implement measures from issues raised.

My values are aligned with Jacobs' and the company is already actively implementing things I care about, such as mental health. I'm a member of OneWorld committee for London and also a Positive Mental Health Champion at Jacobs.

©Luke Agbaimoni

Recently, the company launched its inclusion and diversity programme 'TogetherBeyond'. The most remarkable part of it was the launch of the Global Action Plan for Advancing Justice and Equality, which tackles inequality facing Black people at Jacobs and the wider community.

The plan was driven by members of Harambee in partnership with our Executive Leadership Team and Jacobs' Board of Directors. The Action Plan sets out actionable initiatives and measurable objectives to address embedded and systemic racial inequalities, both within Jacobs and in communities across the world. All of these strategies are geared towards inclusion.

Jacobs has an aspirational 40, 40, 20 goal. That's 40% male, 40% female, and 20% of any gender balance across the global operation. There is an annual culture survey and the policies and steps taken are based on responses to this survey from employees, so the company is open and they want to get employees feedback/input to develop strategies and policies.

Jacobs is disability confident employer and ranked 6th place and won a gold award for 2022 Stonewall Equality Index. For the second year running Jacobs was recognised for its efforts to drive gender equality forward as one of the Times top 50 Employers for Women. It's obvious you'll only receive such recognition when external parties actually see the company doing these things.

PROGRESSION

There are lots of opportunities here. Most opportunities advertised within to make sure employees know of the opportunities available.

There's the Agile careers, employees are strongly encouraged to apply for these opportunities to access the internal opportunities which support upscaling and reskilling.

Specifically for under-represented groups, Harambee actively supports recruitment, retention empowerment and advancement of black talent.

The aim is to achieve true equality across Jacobs but the priority at the moment is to unleash the opportunities for black employees to advance and achieve our ultimate goals. You have mentors that support and champion you. There is really a good career path for me.

ARINZE DAVID NWANNA

STUDENT, AMOS BURSARY

©Luke Agbaimoni

I'm currently studying for a Masters degree at Imperial College on an Amos Bursary. I have a degree in Chemical Engineering as I wanted to transition into petroleum and mining, but am now focusing on FinTech.

I still want an opportunity to transition into technology if I want to, because I have friends who are also part of the Amos Bursary who went into banking for an internship, and then went into tech for another internship and stayed in tech. So, I'm leaving the door open.

At the moment I'm more into banking or private equity, but eventually I want to build up a residential real estate portfolio and then move into real estate.

INTERNSHIP

I've completed a two-month intensive summer internship at JP Morgan in a raw investment banking/corporate finance role in the Technology Media Telecommunications Division, which handles transactions for companies like Spotify, within the Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA) region.

The internship was through JP Morgan's Advancing Black Leaders Programme which provides mentors to help Black students get through the recruitment process.

The intensity was an awakening and gave me an insight into what it is really like to work in a top role – the hours you have to put in, the seriousness of the job, working with a lot of management at such a junior level. It exposes you to the kind of mentality you need to develop to really survive in the work environment. It was really helpful for me and very rewarding in terms of looking upwards and forwards towards my career.

©Luke Agbaimoni

ASPIRATIONS

So much has changed in terms of my mindset over the last two years. Because I'm very analytical, I had wanted a role focused on programming and solving problems and which would allow me to 'speak with the data' — data analytics, machine learning, neural networks, stuff like that.

My internship in corporate finance exposed me to this more business-minded approach to things, which is actually more kind of me. FinTech is the integration of both Finance and Technology and is essentially about using data analytics to solve finance problems, stock predictions, portfolio management.

I think there's a lot more diversity programmes in finance than tech. The only one I knew about in tech was Google's Bold Immersion programme. Initially I applied for roles in companies like Google and Microsoft, but didn't get them.

So, not having the experience, not understanding the playing field, the tech recruitment process made everything a bit ambiguous. I had a good CV, good set of skills, I'm at a good university and have good grades, but I couldn't really understand what they were looking for. In finance I did.

GUIDANCE

If I were to advise organisations on how best to support young Black males and others from under-represented backgrounds, it is to take us out of our current environments and then place us in a boot camp for two to three days.

This would help us to cultivate a mentality [based on the environments that we aspire to work in]. That would definitely change a person's life, far more than an open day or career event and have a long-lasting effect. That was what happened to me when I went to JP Morgan.

The Advancing Black Leaders Programme was like an intensive daily programme where I engaged with people and subconsciously developed a wider mentality. If we have the mentality that we are already in the space we just need to leverage our skills.

I do believe skin colour plays a part, but I believe what affects us more than our skin colour is our mentality. I say this because I'm a mentor to quite a lot of people in this space and half of them either just have a stigma or, due to the current environment, they can't cultivate a mindset that can take them higher than their current state.

ADVICE

In terms of navigating these new environments, sometimes people can experience imposter syndrome. Or they find that they have to resort to code switching or adopting a different kind of mentality to operate in that environment. Yeah, I felt that very strongly.

I saw a lot of people break down, especially in such an intensive role. That's why I believe that it's important to take them into a separate environment early on to allow them to just mingle at a younger age, this would be powerful.

My mentality didn't fit in, and my behaviours didn't naturally fit in. But my motivation to succeed outweighed how I was feeling. You have to have a vision which allows you to stay on target and do what you're here for and kind of move on, regardless of what is going on around you.

During my internship there were many things that I just wasn't used to, or it wasn't part of my culture, which was hard. For example, they drink a lot, and I don't drink alcohol.

There might be occasions where everyone in the team would be drinking and they would say to me 'Oh, why don't you drink? I would have to navigate that, but I am strong in my faith and quite spiritually minded. Also, my line manager would set aside a soft drink, like coke and then let people to get on and do their thing. He didn't make me feel like some dude that doesn't drink.

I think these environments need more people with a similar mentality to my own. It becomes easier for someone like me to stay in these environments rather than say 'oh no, this is not for me'.

Many of the people I mentor, tell me 'I'm the only Black person on the desk', 'I don't want get things wrong', 'I just don't feel welcome'. But if you can help sustain these people because you have the same mentality, then you can build them up and bring other people up and help sustain their motivation. I think that was actually one of the credits put on my report – that I had one of the highest levels of motivation on the team.

ED&I

I saw a lot more Black people at JP Morgan than I would see in a general bank. The company is very inclusive and people at all levels in the organisation would talk about the inclusive values. That was one thing that wowed me. It was trying to solidify the gaps with initiatives such as online inclusivity courses for all staff.

Every week on the Advancing Black Leaders programme there would be a session about the different roles in finance with speakers from different levels, managers, managing directors, associates.

JP Morgan partnered with RARE recruitment to try and get more Black students to apply for roles which was good.

The company was also keen to improve the programme, and wanted to know how to make sure at the recruitment stage that people don't drop out and that they make it all the way through to the end.

My own feeling is that if you're good enough, they take you. If you can solve problems, no matter what skin colour you are, they will take you. Obviously, some people have different experiences, and I acknowledge that. But I haven't really experienced anything like that.

LEKE SHOLUADE
FOUNDER, BLACK VALLEY

©Luke Agbaimonì

I'm the founder of Black Valley, which is a programme that supports Black people looking to get into tech and Black founders looking to start or scale an early-stage tech business. We want to create things that will shape what the future looks like, and having the right people to support brilliant minds with brilliant ideas, to really help take the inception of those ideas and turn them into reality.

Black Valley was kind of birthed out of frustration. Being a young Black man myself and seeing the movement around the death of George Floyd, I was frustrated to see that we're still at that stage where it felt like there was a lot of injustice around Black people and there wasn't a clear way to move the conversation forward. Black Valley was the result of that.

It became clear that as the world becomes more digitalised it was important for Black people to be a part of those people who are creating that digital world, so things being created are not biased against us. The best way to approach that is to support as many Black founders as possible and as many Black talent as possible in order to diversify who works in those spaces.

CAREER

I did a psychology degree because I was fascinated by the mind and how to work with people. So I became a mentor myself whilst at university and started mentoring young people with a charity called the Challenge Network and ended up working for the charity full-time.

I worked in a sales role for about four years, became a sales manager looking after the West Midlands region and then transitioned into working in tech for an education tech start-up in London called Eedi. They developed a diagnostic question and learning platform that allows teachers to understand the misconception that students might have around questions in a range of education subjects; it uses AI and machine learning. .

My background was not necessarily transferable to the tech sector. What was really useful was Eedi was looking for someone who had an understanding of the UK school system. I had knowledge of how to deal with key stakeholders within schools. I didn't have to sell myself.

That environment taught me quite a lot because it was quite a small start-up, so I got involved in every area involving tech from the business side to products to interacting with developers. I interacted with the different functionalities within the business and then after that lockdown happened then the death of George Floyd which inspired me to set up Black Valley.

©Luke Agbaimoni

BLACK VALLEY

I want Black Valley to live up to its name, which is a play on Silicon Valley. The impact that Silicon Valley. It changed the way businesses were funded and started. It changed how business were able to scale. It changed the economy, not only for the area of San Francisco, but also North America.

At Black Valley we run cohort programmes which support people through a co-op delivery model. If you are on our programme we pair you up with a mentor, we run workshops and then we support you for an eight-week period.

We've delivered seven cohorts for our Career Starter Programme, and we've ended up supporting 260 young Black talented people, from the inception of the programme. Alongside that, we run the Founders Programme. We actively support 15 founders on our founder's programme, and we're about to launch another founders programme with 20 additional early-stage Black founders.

THE FUTURE

Most of the unicorns in that area came out of Silicon Valley and had a really positive impact on the American economy. Can we do something similar? Maybe, starting with the UK for Black founders, where we are able to influence social mobility for Black founders and create and generate wealth by supporting Black founders.

In 10 years' time, I imagine Black Valley will be that kick starter for the next Facebook or Microsoft or Calendly, which is founded by a Black founder. We want them to say, 'I am where I am now, but at the early stage of my journey I was part of an organisation called Black Valley and they helped me shape my ideas better'.

We're not government funded and currently rely on secured sponsorship to fund people going through our programmes, such as a £10,000 grant we've been able to give to one of our founders.

I would love to see Black Valley in a position where we are the first delivery for people with great ideas. We've had various sponsors such as Webflow, which is an American based company, Zego is based in the UK , they are an insurance company for the gig economy.

We've got Goodman Sachs. We're got Wilson Sonsini, which is a law firm that deals with tech complaints. They were part of the people that helped Apple gain an IPO in the '80s. So those names are great companies to partner with and work with.

WORKING IN THE TECH SECTOR

Typically, if I mentioned the word developer, there's probably an image that most people have which tends to be White, male and geeky. So historically there aren't that many role models for people of colour to look up to and aspire to go into their first role.

There's a need to maybe make sure, from early on, that you diversify who has access to STEM careers. At Black Valley, we make role models more visible to young people from a diverse background, so they see themselves working in those roles.

We actively encourage organisations themselves as well not to stick to the typical route of applying. One thing that organisations tend to do, especially early-stage start-ups, which with limited budgets, rely on referrals, is say 'I'm a start up, I need a product person and an engineer. Who among my circle can do that role well, and I've worked with them in the past?' You come from a small organisation, and you want to move fast, so you tend to look straight within your immediate circle.

Now, if I'm coming from a specific background, I'm more likely to mix with and go for people within my background because it's just the way things are.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

In terms of the challenges around engage-ment and recruitment, I think there is a lack of ability in terms of the skill requirements. Actually, we have a lot of people that are self-taught in areas like coding. They may have paid for a coding boot camp course and are passionate about the industry so they put in the hours, but they still find it difficult to make the transition into their first paid role.

One of the things that is very apparent is the confidence level. I think within the community that we work with, essentially, they are less likely to feel capable of doing the role even though they have a bit more experience than their White counterparts.

A lot of work that we tend to do is around making sure they feel more confident for those roles and then those roles seem less unobtainable in a way. The other thing that we realise that is missing is this knowing where to look for those roles, especially when we started during the pandemic.

We are trying to make it clear what plat-forms are actively supporting the recruitment of diverse talent, which companies are recruiting, what those routes into the roles look like and then tailoring CVs to the roles.

We are making sure applicants are able to talk about their experience in the right way, especially those transferable skills from whatever experience they've had, whatever predictive work they've done and encourage them to network. We emphasise that a lot because I think people underplay the role of a network in terms of the job search or even just finding out about the opportunity in the first place.

ED&I

We're trying to grow an alumni community to get a better understanding of what's going on. We work with companies that are actively engaged in the conversation around diversity and looking to do more than pay lip service and engage, not just from a recruitment point of view but a retention one as well.

We've been quite lucky with most of our start-ups, because not only have we been able to get people jobs in those companies, the senior people within the organisations

©Luke Agbaimoni

volunteer as mentors on our programmes, because they've seen the impact of getting our talent into their companies.

Companies need to make sure that the internal culture within their organisation is right if they are to retain staff.

I've spoken to organisations before where friends have worked and they were not having a great time working there and they were quite disengaged which is disappointing given that the organisation had been working with us as an innovator.

Some of the challenges people are telling me they are facing are about not being able to progress, being overlooked when putting forward ideas, compared to their White coun-terparts.

They may be feeling that they are not connecting with managers on the same level with everyone else within the organisation, or there's an element of favouritism that doesn't necessarily apply to the quality of work that individual is producing. I have one friend who left his job as a result of that.

MOVING FORWARD

There's no one size fits all; there's no one simple approach when it comes to dealing with diverse or even people from BAME backgrounds. We are not all the same. Because you spoke to one Black person within your company and they feel like this, it doesn't mean they speak for all Black people. Just trying to be open and listening feedback and developing something with the company in mind is always a good fit.

Wherever they're doing, if they work with organisations like ours, they should ask how do I become inclusive? They should engage with us and ask how do I go about doing this differently? How did the people within the organisation, take that on? How does this come across externally? I think it's continuous work and it's not easy work to be done, but to do great work, that's the missing piece, really.

I think it's easy for me as a Black person focused on supporting the Black community within a Black focused organisation to always say, 'well, we need to do more stuff for Black people'. There are so many pieces within integration to take care of, so be reflective and try to bring people along to really create a change.

BLACK MALE,
COLLEGE STUDENT,17

ASPIRATION

I studied A level maths, physics and computer science. I want to do an apprenticeship because uni isn't really for me. I feel like I would enjoy uni while I was there, but I wouldn't get much out of it. The cost is one thing, but it's more that I feel like I'd be better suited if I actually just get into the industry and get experience that way.

I'm really into computer science and things like that. I want to go into software engineering and from what I've heard, they favour experience a lot more than actual qualifications.

I know that doing an apprenticeship would be a good stepping stone and I've applied for seven or eight now. The problem is the interview processes coincided with my exams, so it's kind of unfortunate.

JOB SEARCH

I go on to Google and research any company that has the role I'm looking for and then I just look at what they're offering, more so than looking at the company itself.

For example, I've applied to the BBC recently, American Express, Facebook, BT, a bunch of companies like that which were all offering apprenticeships in the field I want. I'm not picky, it's more about the job for me than the company. While the job search so far has been inconsistent, for the most part, it's been pretty good.

For example, I recently did an interview for American Express and they were quite cordial, but I feel like they didn't really give enough information, before and after the whole process, in terms of exactly what the role entailed.

I didn't really get any feedback as well, which is a bit annoying. That's the only interview process that I've fully gone through. All the other ones are still starting or have said they're getting back to me.

GETTING INTO CONSTRUCTION

For the past few years, my dad has been working in scaffolding which I thought was very interesting, the way he described the whole job to me. The Construction Youth Trust (CYT) ran a weekly workshop at my school where they went over post-18 options. They talked about university, mainly apprenticeships, and going into work as well. It was very, very useful in getting me to apply for things.

I literally went through the list of companies that were offering the apprenticeship that I wanted; none of the construction companies offered them. I saw an opportunity in data science, but I wouldn't really want to have an apprenticeship in that, even though that's probably the closest to what I do want. I really want to be working with code and things like that.

I grew up with computers and my main hobby was coding, playing games. After doing my A level course in computer science, I found out I was pretty good - I would like to think - at code and coding. I'd like to keep games as a hobby rather than a job.

CHALLENGES

I was offered an opportunity by the CYT. In my experience, at school they're very uni focused. So, people who don't want to go to uni aren't really supported as much. So, the fact that I was able to get that oppor-

tunity with the CYT was very good. So, it started in October and ended last month. We're on our own now, but they helped a lot.

For the most part, it's the lack of experience that makes it hard, because I feel like they're looking for experience that we can't get, especially with COVID. I feel like I had to scavenge for work experience. I got a little bit, but that was more through my dad.

His friend is an architect who has his own company, and he gave me work experience for a week or so which was interesting, and I was able to help. I was looking at property and things like that, it was a taste of what it would be like working - a small taste.

Over such a short duration, it's kind of hard to gain any substantial skills, but the experience itself was the main benefit.

I've looked at a couple of internships, but not actively as any time researching internships would be better spent on apprenticeships.

CAREERS SUPPORT

The CYT workshops were very, very useful. The main thing that helped me were the sessions to build a CV. They also gave us a list of every available apprenticeship. We got a mentor who helped us through the process as they had gone through the apprenticeship route themselves.

It would be a lot more helpful if schools, in general, covered more options. We had a form session every day, and essentially one day a week we would spend on UCAS, putting together personal statements, things like that, which I didn't even end up using. So it wasn't that helpful. At least 10-20% of students felt the same.

COVID

The time that we would have been doing work experience was prime Covid time and we were in lock down. The whole work cycle, I guess, might be a bit hard to adjust to and that's my main concern. If I were to give a number from 1 to 10 about being ready for work, I'd say 6 or 7 about the skills required and the ability to learn what I need to. More work experience would have helped with that.

In terms of my education, there was a lot of chaos at my school, and, because of Covid, we didn't actually get to sit our GCSEs, which was nice because I didn't have to do the exams, but I have no experience with the upcoming exams.

FITTING IN AT WORK

I'm keen to get experience in work, but I'm a little worried about fitting in because I feel like I'll be seen as 'quite young and inexperienced'. It would be good if the company was diverse and inclusive, but it's not vital. It would help in choosing between employers, though.

What would make me want to stay with an employer is if I'm enjoying my job. Opportunities for development would be good, but I'm not too ambitious. I don't really think that far ahead, really. Generally, I'm just more thinking about being as good at software engineering as is possible, so that hopefully, eventually I'll be able to progress. I don't know what I would do with that ability, but I would enjoy it, that's for sure.

BLACK MALE, DATA ENGINEER, INTERN

TRAINING

I joined through the government Kickstarter scheme after I dropped out of university. I was in the second year of a science degree and I wasn't enjoying it.

I wanted to transition into tech as the most enjoyable part of my degree was the computing module. I joined a twelve-week data engineering boot camp led by Generation and Infinity Work, which is funded by the European Union Social Fund.

It's a free programme that helps young people who are in work or education transition into tech. They provide you with the necessary technical skills and soft skills to secure a junior data engineer role or whatever role that you want to get into in that field. A friend secured a job through that programme a year ago and I thought 'why not apply for it?'.

I did some personal studying and some online courses before the boot camp and after it as well, just to upskill and learn independently, essentially.

CAREER

I wasn't that confident in applying for junior roles, so decided to go for an internship trainee position instead and found the perfect role for me through the Kickstarter scheme. I think the full title was a Kick-starter Trainee Data Engineer Intern.

What I really wanted was to be trained up and not be thrown into the deep end, but to get the chance to develop my skills without the pressure of producing value for a company.

What attracted me to the company was the job advert on the Kickstarter website, which included a heavy emphasis on training and learning. That made me less nervous, and it made the interview process quite relaxed.

There was also quite a long, attractive list on the work benefits side, such as unlimited holiday, which I didn't know existed. They were paying the London Living Wage, which isn't a lot if you compare it to junior roles, but for a Kickstarter role, I think that's good - some interns just work for free.

When I applied, it was just with my CV. I filled in a questionnaire, then did a first stage interview where they just wanted to get to know me. Once I passed this, the second stage was a technical interview where they set me some tasks. I found it fairly easy compared to the boot camp stuff, but I think they were trying to widen the net to try and catch as many candidates as possible.

Usually, it was just one interviewer and it was sort of just piecing it all together and really trying to get to know me, see if I'm the right fit for the team, find out about my background, that sort of stuff.

The final stage was an interview with three different people in the data science team. Some of the questions they asked during the interviews allowed me to talk about the projects that I'd done in the boot camp and my interests. I feel that if I hadn't done the boot camp, and had just done the online Python courses, the answers I gave wouldn't have been as cohesive.

INDUCTION

There's lots of training and meetings during onboarding and it was always being tweaked according to how I was doing. I got to know the teams during the first few

©Greater London Authority

weeks as there was an interview with the manager of each department and there was a whole data science coffee meet up. They explained what each part of the company does and how it all works together. There was also training for all the different software they use, as well as GDPR training.

I then did three months of really rigorous technical training - Python for one week and then SQL, which is a database language and training in other areas such as DevOps. After that I was given a mini project, to put that learning into practice.

At the end, I got to use all the different training and the mini projects to do one big final project to create a data pipeline, which basically transforms the business census data for the UK and the cultural venue infrastructure data out there and also take into account geographical data and create this visualisation.

What does that mean? Basically, I had to clean up the data, extract it and load it onto a tool to create visualisations. I really

There's an active effort to be more diverse and inclusive and there's a diversity and inclusion survey which monitors gender, sexuality and ethnicity. This data is published on the company intranet, there's an entire section dedicated to diversity and inclusion. So, it's definitely accessible if you want to learn more about it.

I think success for the company would be trying to make recruitment easier for BAME people and being reflective of the actual talent. Because it's a data science company, they rely quite heavily on building a picture of where they're at and where they want to be.

I feel like the survey they use is quite important for them to gauge where they're at, but I'm not entirely sure what their actual goal is or what they're trying to reach in terms of figures.

INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

I would say it's the team spirit that's there. I remember before I went to the office, I was anxious about what type of people were there. Could I relate to them? Could I fit in? Those are sort of the preconceptions that I had, but it changed when I actually went in. I was greeted by the whole team and I felt really welcomed. People approached me, I didn't have to approach them.

I feel that sometimes when companies do target people, it does create an element of awkwardness, even though I know that is a good thing overall to increase inclusion and diversity of younger people because it's not representative - but there's an element of being treated differently and put on the spot.

enjoyed doing it, and it definitely made me more confident in my skills, being able to complete things.

I managed to hit my three-month programme objectives quite easily (these are set in line with the training plan) and pass my probation period. It's been a really educational experience so far, like I'm learning so much each day. The team is really friendly and supportive, and I've really developed as a person since my time here.

ED&I

The company's diversity is immediately obvious; you see people from multiple backgrounds, different nationalities, and a lot of women as well. I've seen it as well in the Kickstarter scheme - other interns from a BAME background have been employed as well.

There's also a scheme to support young people at different stages of their education and train them in data science, through work experience and placements.

When I joined, I'm not sure if this was how everyone was treated, but I was treated almost too nicely - which seems quite a stupid thing to say - but I'm not sure if I would have been treated the same if I was someone else, even though it's definitely a good thing and you want to be treated nicely - it just felt a bit too much at times. Overall, it is a great company - I'm probably reading into things.

It's a really social company. Every Friday, everyone meets up for drinks in the office. They also meet up after work and do different things, like going to bowling, or 'make your own pizza at home' where they gave us a kit.

Every week there's a company forum where different people from different departments talk about what's going on in the company. You're not just doing your own work for your own department; you know what everyone's doing and what you can do to contribute.

I've only experienced working in a small sized business, so I wasn't sure how big corporations work or if it would be the right fit for me, but definitely smaller sized teams are easier to get along with - you know everyone and it's not as compartmentalised.

PROGRESSION

I want to continue down the data engi-neering route and go for a junior role that suits my needs. There are different vacancies for data engineering roles that use different technologies and I want ones that I've been using, like tech stack (a set of technologies stacked together to build an application), so it's easier to work with.

I've updated my profile accordingly with my new experience and I've had quite a lot of recruiters reaching out to me. So, I feel really optimistic about the future and getting a junior role with my new skills. Building up my GitHub, which is the online portfolio for all the coding projects I've done, is quite easy to link to LinkedIn and show all my certificates.

Interviews, skills practice, CV workshops, that sort of stuff, would definitely help me progress. Also being mentored by people that are further on in their career in similar positions and from similar backgrounds – knowing what their experiences have been and what I can learn from them.

From the vacancies that I've looked at though, I've noticed there aren't that many diversity and inclusion factors. I have been messaged by recruiters, but I'm not sure what their intentions are, if they're targeting me purely because of what I've done or because of my background.

Mainly I look at a post and see if it matches what I think is good. I look at the salary and what sort of tech stack they have. Is it an entry role? Is it a junior role? Is it diverse and inclusive as well? I would say, knowing which company is a good company to work for, not just in terms of fitting in, but the wider company culture as well, is important.

©Luke Agbaimoni

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS