

BAME Representation in Apprenticeships Post Covid-19

Summary of Recommendations by the BAME Apprenticeship Alliance:

1. **Continue investment** into the **Five Cities project** which supports BAME communities in building awareness of apprenticeships and bridges gaps with employers.
2. **Incentivise employers** to increase outreach into BAME communities with focus on local communities.
3. **Incentivise local organisations** to build capacity for youth employment services, mental health, financial education services for BAME youth.

Mitigating against a Covid-19 'crisis cohort'

The BAME Apprenticeship Alliance welcomes the kickstart programme to retain and create opportunities at a time where the economy is facing a pandemic induced recession. We are yet to see the full-blown impacts of the already dismal trajectory prior to the pandemic of increasing youth unemployment and underemploymentⁱ particularly for school leavers amidst an education crisis.

Government support in the form of 'A plan for Jobs'ⁱⁱ is a move in the right direction to mitigate labour market scarring as a result of this unemployment fuelled recession. There is evidence that the 'crisis cohort' that graduated in the aftermath of the financial crisis hasn't yet recoveredⁱⁱⁱ, therefore significant effort is needed to make sure that today's youth do not fall into another 'crisis cohort'.

Government announcements for support

There have been announcements to support the youth in terms of the labour market that are welcome including cash incentives where employers could receive up to £3000 for hiring 16 to 18 year old apprentices during the six month incentive scheme, the pledge to give all 18 to 19 year olds in England the opportunity to study level 2 and 3 courses throughout 2020-21 and an additional £32 million funding over the next two years for the National Careers Service with the aim to provide personalised support for 269,000 more people^{iv}.

However, there is still cause for concern given that young employees on the Kickstart programme cannot also be apprentices, which according to the chief executive of the Association of Employment

and Learning Providers is likely to produce unintended consequences by wiping out new apprenticeship starts for the 18 month duration of the wage support incentive^v. Furthermore, the impact of the additional £111 million boost for proven traineeships is questionable as there were only 14900 starts last year^{vi}.

The announcements by the Chancellor should not be watered down as they mitigate against the worsening uncertainty that the youth find themselves in but at the same time, care needs to be taken to ensure that efforts do not unintentionally side-line apprentices. The BAME Apprenticeship Alliance fears that the government target of increasing BAME (Black, Asian and ethnic minority) representation by 20% by 2020 will be pushed to the back of the queue^{vii}.

Why improve BAME representation in apprenticeships?

The lack of BAME diversity in apprenticeships is too high to ignore – for example, in 2015/16, thirty eight percent of the applicants for apprenticeships were from ethnic minority groups but only about a half were taken on as apprentices that year^{viii}. Although the proportion of BAME starts has been increasing over time, it has been on a lesser scale with BAME volumes decreasing since the levy reforms by 10 percent^{ix}.

Already, those in their early twenties are 2.5 times more likely to work in a shut-down sector such as hospitality than other workers and the IFS found that low earners are seven times more likely to work in such sectors^x. In 'A plan for

Jobs', it is noted that for the shut-down hospitality sector, 'workers are more likely to be female or from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background relative to the overall workforce', which is why there needs to be a targeted approach to mitigate the consequences for BAME youth that face a double layered disadvantage – weak job market and BAME specific barriers to entry.

Key problems around low BAME representation include the low success rates in recruitment, a lower probability of completing an apprenticeship and the homogenising of racial groups^{xi}, which creates problems in creating solutions that actually work.

This unimpressive trajectory of underrepresentation is highly likely to be compounded by the consequences of Covid-19 on BAME communities. This pandemic has brought deep rooted disparities to the forefront and there is evidence that the BAME community is at a heavy socio-economic and health disadvantage moving forward^{xii}. To ensure equitable and inclusive growth, further action needs to be taken to ensure that BAME representation is improved.

BAME Apprenticeship Alliance Recommendations

1. Continue investment into the Five Cities project which supports BAME communities in building awareness of apprenticeships and bridges gaps with employers.

The Five Cities project was launched by the Department for Education to oversee the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) work with partners to promote the take-up of apprenticeships among under-represented groups, including BAME and those from disadvantaged backgrounds^{xiii}.

'Key partners supporting the drive include some of the UK's top employers - B&Q, Rolls Royce, Optimity, and Interserve - as well as local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, apprenticeship providers, schools, and community groups'^{xiv}.

The BAME Apprenticeship Alliance finds that it is vital to empower students from BAME

backgrounds by building their confidence, self-awareness and other soft skills and it has run The Apprenticeship Roadshow during National Apprenticeship Week 2020 across three schools while working with 90 students from BAME backgrounds. There is a strong case, therefore, to continue investment into the Five Cities project.

2. Incentivise employers to increase outreach into BAME communities with focus on local communities.

Increasing outreach into BAME communities is a relatively low-cost solution that has the potential to create high impact as evidence by Career Ready, a social mobility charity, which suggests that 'Young people who experience four or more encounters with the world of work have significantly higher earnings by age 24 and are 86 percent less likely to be unemployed. There is also growing evidence of improved academic attainment'^{xv}.

3. Incentivise local organisations to build capacity for youth employment services, mental health, financial education services for BAME youth.

Every region of England has each seen funding for youth services cut by more than 60% since 2010^{xvi} and according to research by Unison, cuts in youth service spending over the years has weakened the ability for youth services to provide effective services for young people and more than half of UNISON members working in youth services in 2013 felt that more than half of young people are less empowered^{xvii}.

Organisations such as the Miranda Brawn Diversity Leadership Foundation address this gap by designing and delivering 'innovative educational, confidence building and diversity leadership programmes to enable those from diverse social backgrounds to achieve their potential and true success. We cater for young people from all ethnicities and diverse backgrounds'^{xviii}.

Providing incentives to local organisations to build capacity is therefore paramount to improving BAME representation in apprenticeships.

- ⁱ Evans, S. and Dromey, J., 2020. *Coronavirus And The Labour Market: Impacts And Challenges*. [online] Learningandwork.org.uk. Available at: <<https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-and-the-Labour-Market-Impacts-and-Challenges.pdf>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ⁱⁱ GOV.UK. 2020. *A Plan For Jobs 2020*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ⁱⁱⁱ Clarke, S., 2019. *Growing Pains: The Impact Of Leaving Education During A Recession On Earnings And Employment*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2019/05/Growing-pains-final-report.pdf>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{iv} Camden, B., 2020. *Speed Read: What The Chancellor's Summer Statement Promised For FE And Skills*. [online] FE Week. Available at: <<https://feweek.co.uk/2020/07/08/speed-read-what-the-chancellors-summer-statement-promised-for-fe-and-skills/>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^v Camden, B., 2020. *'Kickstarter' Young Employees Cannot Also Be Apprentices, Treasury Confirms*. [online] FE Week. Available at: <<https://feweek.co.uk/2020/07/08/kickstarter-young-employees-cannot-also-be-apprentices-treasury-confirms/>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{vi} Camden, B., 2020. *Speed Read* Op cit.
- ^{vii} Mutlib, I., 2020. *Making Apprenticeships Count For Disadvantaged Communities In The COVID-19 New Normal*. [online] FE News. Available at: <<https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/49690-making-apprenticeships-count-for-disadvantaged-communities-in-the-covid-19-new-normal>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{viii} Davies, C., 2019. *Exploring Positive Action As A Tool To Address Under-Representation In Apprenticeships*. [online] Equalityhumanrights.com. Available at: <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-123-positive-action-apprenticeships.pdf>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{ix} Mutlib, I., 2020. *Making Apprenticeships Count For Disadvantaged Communities In The COVID-19 New Normal*., Op cit.
- ^x Evans, S. and Dromey, J., 2020. *Coronavirus And The Labour Market*., Op cit
- ^{xi} Davies, C., 2019. *Exploring Positive Action As A Tool To Address Under-Representation In Apprenticeships*., Op cit.
- ^{xii} Thelancet.com. 2020. *COVID-19 And Ethnicity: Who Will Research Results Apply To?*. [online] Available at: <[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31380-5.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31380-5.pdf)> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{xiii} FE News. 2020. *Five Cities Project - New Project To Boost Diversity In Apprenticeships*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.fenews.co.uk/press-releases/16066-new-project-to-boost-diversity-in-apprenticeships>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{xiv} Ibid.
- ^{xv} Careerready.org.uk. 2019. *Our Impact | Career Ready*. [online] Available at: <<https://careerready.org.uk/about-us/our-impact>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
- ^{xvi} Eichler, W., 2020. *Youth Service Funding Cut By 70% Over Decade*. [online] Localgov.co.uk. Available at: <<https://www.localgov.co.uk/Youth-service-funding-cut-by-70-over-decade/49844>> [Accessed 16 July 2020].
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