INTRODUCTION

In partnership with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion), the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) hosted a one day conference in December 2014 to look at ways of increasing ethnic minority participation in Apprenticeships. The conference was sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and speakers included Jeremy Crook OBE, Director of BTEG, Dave Simmonds OBE, Chief Executive of Inclusion, Stephen Timms MP, Shadow Employment Team Labour Party, David Hughes, Chief Executive of NIACE, Tanya Lawes, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) along with Apprenticeship employers and training providers.

This report summarises the issues which were raised and discussed at the conference and presents recommendations arising from the conference for what should happen now to increase ethnic minority participation in Apprenticeships.
APPRENTICESHIPS AND EQUALITIES: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The need for skills and jobs

The current labour force lacks the skills needed to improve productivity in the UK economy. Dave Simmonds quoted research from the Commission on Employment and Skills which shows that the average qualification level across the UK labour force is five A-C grade GCSEs but this needs to rise to three A levels to meet the demands of global competition.

All the main political parties are agreed that Apprenticeships are one of the main routes for increasing the skills and qualification levels of the UK workforce. A drive to increase the number of Apprenticeships in England resulted in a more than threefold increase in the decade between 2002/03 and 2012/13; from around 150,000 to over 500,000 people starting an Apprenticeship each year.

Ethnic minority participation in Apprenticeships

Ethnic minority people continue to be under-represented in Apprenticeships.

Ethnic minority people make up about 15 per cent of the working age population in England but only 10 per cent of all the people who start an Apprenticeship.

In 2002/03, five per cent of people starting Apprenticeships were from black and minority ethnic groups. This proportion rose moderately each year to reach 10 per cent in 2010/11 and has remained static at 10 per cent since then.

Apprenticeship starts by ethnic group

Age and ethnicity

The proportion of ethnic minority Apprenticeship starts is higher for older age groups; 12 per cent of Apprenticeship starters aged 25 and over were from ethnic minority groups in 2012/13, compared with nine per cent in the 20 to 24 age group and seven per cent in the 16 to 19 age group.
The proportion of people aged 25 and over who start an Apprenticeship has risen dramatically; from around 0.1 per cent in 2006/07 to 12 per cent in 2007/08 and up to 45 per cent in 2012/13. This may be good for older learners but there are strong concerns about the effects on opportunities for young people.

**Ethnic minority population and ethnic minority apprenticeship starts in England (%)**

![Chart showing the percentage of population and apprenticeship starts by age group.]

**Sector concentrations**

Ethnic minorities are very under-represented in some Apprenticeship sectors, including engineering and construction, and over-represented in others such as leisure, travel and tourism, and public services. The concentrations of ethnic minority apprentices in some sectors and absence from others closely mirrors patterns within the wider labour market.

**Gap between applications and starts**

The proportion of ethnic minority people who apply for an Apprenticeship is far higher than the proportion who start one. In 2011/12, around 25 per cent of applications made via the central Apprenticeship Vacancies system were from ethnic minority people but only 10 per cent of the starts in that year were by ethnic minorities.

**Falling numbers**

The total number of Apprenticeships in England has fallen each year since 2011/12. There were 440,400 Apprenticeship starts in 2013/14 compared with a peak of 520,600 starts in 2011/12.

Mirroring the overall drop, the number of ethnic minority people starting Apprenticeships has fallen: from around 51,000 in 2011/12 to about 45,000 in 2013/14.

**Improving equalities**

A new Apprenticeship Advisory Group was established in 2014 to help BIS to improve equalities in Apprenticeships.
Gary Zetter, Operations Director at MITIE plc, believes that in an increasingly competitive labour market, Apprenticeships are “future proofing” his business. MITIE regards Apprenticeships as an investment in the company. The young Apprentices who join MITIE and grow their skills and talent there will be the company’s directors of the future.
APPRENTICESHIPS AND EQUALITIES: THE MAIN CONCERNS

Why has so little changed in 15 years?

Very little has changed since the beginning of this century. The proportion of ethnic minority people starting an Apprenticeship rose modestly in most years from 2002/03 to 2010/11 but has remained static at around 10 per cent since 2010/11.

Various research studies of ethnic minority participation in Apprenticeships have reached the same conclusion; that ethnic minority young people do not have the same opportunities as white young people to secure quality Apprenticeships leading to good jobs. Ethnic minority young people are applying for Apprenticeships in large numbers but their applications are less likely to be successful than those from white young people. David Hughes pointed out that research by NIACE back in 2000 found that employer recruitment practices were the main reason for ethnic minority under-representation in Apprenticeships.

Despite repeated research on this subject, there is little sign that recommendations for improving access to Apprenticeships for ethnic minority young people are being implemented.

A tarnished brand?

There are strong concerns, expressed by Stephen Timms and other speakers, that the Apprenticeship ‘brand’ has become tarnished in recent years. Some large employers appear to be using the programme to convert existing jobs into Apprenticeships in order to collect public funding subsidies. This practice devalues Apprenticeships which can no longer always be trusted to provide a high quality training route into a skilled career.

What are the outcomes for Apprentices?

There is no data on outcomes from Apprenticeships. The information which is routinely collected and published shows how many people start and finish an Apprenticeship, but does not show what happens to those people afterwards. Do they stay in employment with the same company? How many Apprenticeships lead to full time jobs? What are the outcomes from Apprenticeships for ethnic minorities and for other equalities groups? None of these questions can be answered currently.

The engineering sector is notable for the low numbers of ethnic minority employees and apprentices, so JTL stands out as an Apprenticeships provider which has consistently recruited a significant proportion of ethnic minorities. JTL has worked hard to raise its profile within ethnic minority communities; JTL Equality and Diversity Officer Yasmin Damree-Ralph describes the company as “probably one of the best/worst kept secrets among BAME young people”. As a result, the proportion of ethnic minority apprentices at JTL has increased steadily over the years to a current high of around 14 per cent.
APPRENTICESHIPS AND EQUALITIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Government leadership on equalities in Apprenticeships

Clear and strong leadership is needed from the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and BIS to promote race equality in Apprenticeships. Many employers and training providers will take their cue from the Government and are unlikely to consider equalities issues unless required to or encouraged to by the Government.

Equalities action plan

BIS should develop and implement a national action plan to improve equalities in Apprenticeships. The new Apprenticeship Advisory Group can help to develop an action plan but BIS must lead on its implementation.

Improved careers advice for young people

BIS must take a lead on improving careers advice for young people. All careers advice should include information about Apprenticeship opportunities and support for young people to apply for these.

Better information about Apprenticeship outcomes

A clearer picture of outcomes from Apprenticeships is needed. BIS should lead on collecting and publishing data on outcomes from Apprenticeships, including equalities data, so that continuing debate about Apprenticeships is informed by accurate information about progression and outcomes for apprentices.

Overcoming barriers to recruitment

Targeted equalities work is needed in sectors where ethnic minority apprentices are under-represented. This work should focus on raising awareness among employers, particularly smaller employers, of the barriers which can prevent some groups of people from being employed in their sector, and on promoting good practice by employers in removing these barriers.

Better use of public procurement

More work is needed for public bodies to understand how they can use public procurement as a lever for ensuring equal opportunities in Apprenticeships. This work should include training for public sector members and officers on how promoting equalities fits within legislation relevant to procurement, and on good practice within the public sector on monitoring equalities performance within public sector supply chains.

NIACE proposals

- Apprenticeship providers should be required to negotiate equalities agreements which set out how they will ensure equal opportunities and outcomes from the public funding they receive.
• There must be more robust monitoring of equality and diversity as part of the inspection process for Apprenticeship training providers.

• A new quality mark for Apprenticeships which embeds equality should be developed.

• Government leadership is needed to ensure that all Local Enterprise Partnerships address equalities in their local skills and employment growth programmes.

Labour Party proposals

• To introduce a Job Guarantee for young people modelled on the success of the Future Jobs Fund.

• To use public spending to influence the creation of new Apprenticeship places.

• To ensure that new Apprenticeships should always be for new jobs, and that training should always be at least at Level 3.

As a business organisation, the East London Business Alliance’s (ELBA’s) focus is on engaging with and supporting local businesses, which includes helping to meet their recruitment needs. Last year ELBA helped fill over 800 job vacancies in East London by finding and preparing suitable local candidates. Over 90 per cent of the candidates that ELBA places into jobs are from ethnic minority groups. ELBA’s Julie Hutchinson believes that there are plenty of job opportunities out there but the challenge is to get young people suitably prepared to be put in front of employers.
MORE INFORMATION

For recent research on gender and race equality in Apprenticeships see:

For statistics on Apprenticeship starts and completions by ethnic group, and for other statistics on education, employment and enterprise by ethnic group, visit BTEG’s Key Statistics at: http://www.bteg.co.uk/content/key-statistics


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