



Construction sector employer engagement event 10 April 2017

Main messages from this event

1. Introduction

The Moving on Up employer engagement event on 10 April 2017 explored the under-representation of young black men in London's construction sector and what companies can do to address this. Representatives from 12 employers took part in the event, including several major construction companies. This note summarises the main messages emerging from the event discussions and highlights issues for further consideration.

2. Why did companies participate in this event?

Companies know that some groups are under-represented in the construction sector, including young black men. They want to know what practical actions they can take to change this.

3. Reasons for under-representation of young black men

There is no single explanation for under-representation of young black men in construction but many factors which include:

- Young black men don't want to work in construction because of:
 - Poor image of the sector (low pay, lack of opportunities);
 - Perception and/or experience of workplace racism and management-level failures to deal with this;
 - Lack of black role models in construction.
- Young black men cannot get into the sector because of:
 - Traditional reliance on word of mouth recruitment and cost barriers (for small companies) to opening up recruitment methods.
- Young black men don't stay in the sector because of:
 - Perception and/or experience of workplace racism and management-level failures to deal with this;
 - Are black employees more likely to get laid off? (this is possible but no hard evidence on this)
- Companies cannot recruit young black men because:

- This is a small population and the number with the right qualifications is even smaller and harder to find.

4. What more can construction companies do?

- Companies are already doing things to increase diversity in the industry; some companies have been running initiatives for years. But the employment profile and image of the sector have not changed, so more needs to be done, sector-wide to make significant change at every level.
- Companies need to make a long term commitment and investment in creating an industry which attracts employees from all backgrounds.
- The construction sector is still very reliant on 'who you know/word of mouth' recruitment. Recruitment needs to be opened up and recruitment processes made as easy as possible.
- The construction sector needs some re-branding to promote the range of career opportunities on offer.
- Construction companies should do more to actively promote diversity: e.g. say diversity on their websites and on job adverts; advertise in places used by diverse communities; support black employees to do recruitment events etc.

5. Next steps: issues to tackle

- The drivers for construction companies to take action need identifying. Why should companies do anything to increase employment opportunities for young black men?
- Once the drivers for construction companies have been identified, they need to be translated into clear messages which can be promoted to employers. The messages need to be direct, simple and make it as easy as possible for employers to act.
- Some construction companies are strongly focused on increasing gender diversity in the sector and may be reluctant to get involved with MoU as it targets only young black males.
- Of the many factors which explain under-representation of young black men in construction, which factors should companies deal with? Where to prioritise?