

**NATIONAL
POLICY
SYMPOSIUM**

**Modern
Apprenticeships
& Black and
Minority Ethnic
Young People**

About the LSC

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was established in April 2001 and is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England other than in Universities. The council's mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training, which puts learners first.

The LSC has important duties to make learning more inclusive, to widen participation, identify and help stamp out unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all learners. It will contribute to tackling social and economic disadvantage by removing barriers to post 16 education and training.

The LSC's vision is to create a learning society free from discrimination and prejudice, which encourages and helps all learners reach their full potential.

About BTEG

Black¹ Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) is a national policy and research organisation, established in 1991 by representatives from the black voluntary sector.

BTEG is unique in England for its focus on skills, employment, enterprise and regeneration. We support a network of voluntary and private sector providers that deliver skills, employment and enterprise learning provision to unemployed black people.

Our mission is to ensure fair access and outcomes for black communities in economic development activities; and to act as a catalyst for enabling black people and organisations to play an active role in the renewal of local areas through partnership with others.

BTEG is a member of a number of government advisory committees, including the DWP's Minority Ethnic Group to the National Employment Panel, the Small Business Service National Forum for Start-ups and the LSC Equality and Diversity Advisory Group.

¹Black includes people of African, Caribbean, South Asian and South East Asian Origin

Acknowledgements	3
Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
1. The context	5
1.1 The Learning and Skills Council's role	5
1.2 The Sector Skills Development Agency's role	6
1.3 The Connexions Partnerships' role	7
2. Workshops	8
2.1 Promoting MAs to BME young people	8
2.2 Diversifying the provider base	10
2.3 Addressing the employer agenda	12
2.4 Embedding equality within MAs and the LSC	14
3. Plenary feedback	17
4. Key issues	18
5. Summary of proposed solutions	20

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Special thanks also goes to the speakers, facilitators and delegates for contributing to a stimulating debate on ways to improve the participation and outcomes for black and minority ethnic young people on Modern Apprenticeships.

Abbreviations

ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
AMA	Advanced Modern Apprenticeship
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BVS	Black voluntary sector
CXP	Connexions Partnership
EDIMs	Equality and Diversity Impact Measures
FMA	Foundation Modern Apprenticeship
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NVQs	National Vocational Qualifications
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SSCs	Sector Skills Councils
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
WBL	Work-based Learning

This one day national policy Symposium, organised by the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on 19 March 2003, aimed to find ways forward for increasing the participation and positive outcomes for black and minority ethnic (BME) young people on Modern Apprenticeships (MAs).

MAs are a key plank of the Government's plans to widen opportunities and raise standards for all young people. To this end, the Government has set a target to ensure that by 2004, 28% of all 16-21 year olds are in a Modern Apprenticeship.

But the current participation and outcome rates of BME young people engaged in MAs is of concern. LSC figures for 2001-2 show that:

- BME take up is low; less than 3% of BME young people (aged 16-19) start a Modern Apprenticeship;
- BME young people are strongly channelled towards programmes with a history of poor achievement and away from high-achieving programmes: more than 4,700 BME starts on NVQ learning compared with fewer than 1,700 BME starts on Advanced Modern Apprenticeships;
- BME job outcomes are poor; for all work-based learning (WBL), 72% of white leavers are in a job compared with 48% of BME leavers².

Over 90 participants attended the Symposium from a range of agencies, including the LSC, Connexions, Sector Skills Councils and vocational learning providers. The focus of the event was on practical action; bringing together ideas and experience on effective ways of ensuring that BME young people equally benefit from the opportunities offered by MAs. The Symposium concentrated on identifying the issues and finding ways to address them in four key areas:

- Promoting MAs to BME young people and their key influencers;
- Diversifying the provider base;
- Addressing the employer agenda;
- Embedding equality within Modern Apprenticeships and the LSC.

This report summarises the good practice, conclusions and ways forward identified by the Symposium. A detailed analysis of the background and context for the event is provided in the Symposium Briefing Paper that is available from www.bteg.co.uk

²Presented in the Policy Symposium Briefing Paper, Modern Apprenticeship and Black and Ethnic Minority Young People, 19 March 2003, available from www.bteg.co.uk

1.1 The Learning and Skills Council s Role

The LSC has a statutory duty, remit and core commitment to achieving equality of opportunity, widening access to learning and promoting diversity.

While it has taken important steps towards achieving these objectives, including publication of the National Equality and Diversity Strategy and Objectives (March 2002) and the introduction of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs), the distance to travel for the LSC and its local arms is immense.

As Caroline Neville, LSC Director of Policy & Development, reminded the Symposium:

- There is serious under-representation of young people from BME groups in Modern Apprenticeships;
- In the workforce as a whole, BME people are under-represented at the higher levels and over-represented at the less well paid grades in the workforce;
- African Caribbean boys are excluded from school at approximately four times the rate of their white counterparts.

Significant change is still needed to achieve the LSC vision of creating a learning society which is free from discrimination and prejudice and which encourages and helps all learners to reach their full potential .

Caroline Neville highlighted four key steps for the LSC to achieve this vision:

- Understanding why some learners have been failed in education;
- Recognising that some factors are common to groups but others are unique to the individual;
- Removing the barriers to the group by focusing on the needs of the individual;
- Changing learning provision to fit the learner.

Stressing that achieving change on the ground is a slow process with no quick fix agenda , Caroline told delegates that the Symposium was itself part of the change process and that conference feedback would help to inform LSC policy in this area.

1.2 The Sector Skills Development Agency's Role

The new Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and its network of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are the link between employers and the public agencies that plan and deliver training to meet employers skills needs.

As they become established, SSCs will help to articulate employers skills needs and increase employers recognition of the connection between skills and productivity, thereby increasing skills demand.

Paul Litchfield, SSDA Head of Policy, explained why equality and diversity will be central to the work of the SSDA and the SSCs, as indeed they must be central to all labour market policies and workforce development planning: one third of London's current workforce is of BME origin and 50% of workforce growth in the next 10 years will be from BME communities.

Paul Litchfield outlined the four key goals of the SSDA and SSCs:

- To reduce skill shortages and skill gaps;
- To improve productivity, business and public service performance;
- To increase opportunities to develop and improve the productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action to address equal opportunities;
- To enhance the learning supply.

As they develop, SSCs and the SSDA will have a pivotal role in improving participation and outcomes for BME young people on MAs, primarily through strategic engagement of employers. SSC engagement with employers at a strategic level will change perspectives:

- Of what a sector needs for success and what employers must do;
- About what incentive or voluntary arrangements may be needed to ensure collective responsibility;
- About the need for different strategies for small employers.

1.3 The Connexions Partnerships Role

The Connexions service has been established to improve and co-ordinate services for 13-19 year olds. The Connexions service plays a critical role in supporting young people to make choices about their futures.

Jennifer Izekor, Chief Executive of London East Connexions Partnership, showed the Symposium how vital a dedicated service for this age group is in the London East area:

- 10% of 16-19 year olds in London East are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- 89% of young people in the NEET group are labour market available ;
- 65% of young people in the NEET group need intensive support.

Raising levels of participation is a key challenge for the Connexions service. Meeting this challenge involves:

- Not generalising about BME communities — there are different issues for different communities which need to be separately understood and addressed in appropriate ways;
- Listening to young people;
- Working in partnership — particularly with the LSC;
- Raising young people s aspirations;
- Challenging stereotypes;
- Taking the Connexions service to the community — not waiting in the office for the local community to find the service.

London East Connexions Partnership is committed to increasing participation of young people and has developed a range of mechanisms to help develop this, including high levels of input from young people through youth panels and consultation.

Young people in the East London area have identified four main ways in which public agencies should increase the involvement and participation of young people:

- Through better promotion of the opportunities which are available;
- By involving young people in improving the quality of provision;
- By enhancing the involvement of young people at a strategic level;
- Through improved consultation with young people who are hardest to reach.

2.1 Promoting MAs to BME young people and their key influencers

This workshop started with presentations from Alexis Michaelides from Dv8 Training and Jenny Newlands, Apprentice and Training Manager at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Both shared their experience of developing and delivering training and education programmes which support young black and ethnic minority people into employment.

Workshop discussion

The workshop discussion took place in two stages. The first part of the discussion aimed to identify and agree the key issues for promoting MA to BME young people, while the second part focused on finding solutions to each issue. The following is a summary of the workshop discussion and the feedback which was given at the plenary session by the workshop Chair, Jonathan Swaby from Windrush Employment and Training Consortium.

Issues raised

There are a number of significant barriers which prevent BME young people from taking up MAs, including:

- Entry qualification requirements, which put off low academic achievers who are bright learners;
- Discrimination from employers and training providers;
- Lack of childcare facilities;
- No community or family tradition of work in the sectors covered by MAs;
- Negative connotation of the term *apprentice* in some cultures.
- The recruitment and other HR practices of some employers are inappropriate and exclude BME young people from taking up MAs;
- There are few positive role models of success through MAs for BME young people to aspire to.

Proposed solutions

- For LSCs, vocational learning providers, Connexions advisers and others to effectively promote MAs, they need to meet BME young people on their own territory; in youth clubs, schools etc.
- LSCs, vocational learning providers and Connexions need to produce better information for BME young people and their parents — information which is aimed at empowering them to ask the right questions and take a proactive part in deciding about their own futures.
- The expectations of BME young people need to be raised, and from a much earlier age.

Work needs to begin with primary school age children to raise awareness, develop their aspirations and to give positive information about vocational career options.

- SSCs need to work with employers to develop better pathways for young people from MAs to full-time careers in their chosen industry.

CASE STUDY: Tower Hamlets Local Labour in Construction

Tower Hamlets Council has set a minimum target of 20% local employment and 5% ethnic minority employment on all construction sites within the borough. The Council uses MAs to help ensure that sufficient numbers of skilled local people will be able to fill these jobs.

Construction is not a traditional industry within the Tower Hamlets area. In 1997, out of a cohort of 965 students leaving school only 9 showed any interest in working in the construction industry. Many different methods have been used to generate an interest within local BME communities, including:

- Speaking to community elders;
- Advertising in local community newspapers;
- Giving talks in local schools;
- Evening and weekend visits to youth clubs;
- Making a video to show young people from the Bangladeshi community about the positive opportunities in construction.

The Local Labour in Construction (LLiC) Team provides individual support, advice and guidance to help young people choose the right options for them, and has developed a support pathway that ensures that young people can work towards the construction career of their choice and are not barred by lack of entry level qualifications.

Supporting BME young people to take up a MA in construction involves devoting time to each individual. The LLiC team ensures that each individual is clear about what it means to become an apprentice and is supported to deal with some of the obstacles they may encounter on site. Trainees who have now qualified are encouraged to act as role models for the apprenticeship programme and their community.

2.2 Diversifying the provider base

Pradnya Ranade, Research and Development Officer from PATH National, opened this workshop with a presentation on the role of the black voluntary sector (BVS) in delivering the skills agenda.

Pradnya outlined recent research in this area, highlighting the barriers faced by BVS learning providers in competing to deliver mainstream LSC-funded provision. Pradnya posed three key questions for discussion in the workshop:

- How serious is the LSC in working with the BVS learning providers?
- What is the future for BVS learning providers?
- How do we want Government departments to work together?

Workshop discussion

The workshop discussion took place in two stages. The first part of the discussion aimed to identify and agree the key issues for diversifying the LSC provider base while the second part focused on finding solutions to these issues. The following is a summary of the workshop discussion and the feedback which was given at the plenary session by the workshop Chair, Ebrahim Dockrat, BTEG Board Director.

Issues raised

- Quality issues. The ability of organisations to provide quality learning to the standards set by LSCs;
- Rationalisation/reviewing of the LSC provider base. Need to address the LSC's commitment to encouraging a BME provider base and ways to encourage BME providers to participate and engage in the scheme;
- BME providers tend to have short-term funding and projects. This makes it difficult for these providers to progress;
- Mainstream providers are in a privileged position by being supported by LSCs to develop their capacity. Those outside mainstream provision are not receiving the same help. BVS learning providers enter a vicious circle as they are excluded and not in the LSC loop. Therefore, they are unable to raise strategic issues that they are facing, which subsequently means that they are unable to engage with the LSC in a meaningful way to enable them to progress and develop to meet the standards required by the LSCs.
- Address what is meant by black-led. For example, a college has 70% BME staff and users

but is not actually black-led - how does the LSC view this and is it affecting the process of diversifying the provider base?

Solutions offered

The LSC should develop and publish a policy statement setting out its commitment to diversifying the provider base and detailing ways in which local LSCs can achieve this, including:

- Encouraging sub-contracting arrangements through which BME providers are sub-contracted to deliver specialist services. Local LSCs should provide BVS learning providers with information about contractors which will allow them to make the necessary links;
- Brokering local delivery consortia involving a range of large and small providers e.g. colleges and small BVs learning providers delivering different elements of WBL;
- Providing mentoring support between established mainstream learning providers and BVS learning providers;
- Ensuring comprehensive BVS involvement in local learning provider networks and effective representation on Local Learning Partnerships;
- Use of the Standards Fund to provide capacity building support to BVS learning providers.

The LSC could pilot a Positive Action approach to developing more BVS learning providers to compete for mainstream delivery contracts. Positive Action would help to redress the currently uneven playing field by building up the capacity of a range of BVS learning providers to deliver across the spectrum of WBL provision.

The profile of the provider base should be a separate Equality and Diversity Impact Measure (EDIM) for each local area to ensure that this is monitored, reviewed and addressed where necessary. A related EDIM for diversity within each provider organisation would also help to shape employers attitudes to diversity and equality.

2.3 Addressing the Employer Agenda

This workshop was introduced with presentations from Carol Jacobs and Kate Madelin of Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the audio-visual industries, and Alan Chambers from JTL, a national training provider for the electrical and plumbing industries. These contrasting presentations highlighted that for the audio-visual industries:

- Barriers to MA entry are huge, as some employers do not recognise the MA programme;
- Most employers are only interested in recruiting graduates;
- Many prospective MA applicants are over 25, and therefore ineligible;
- There are no BME people on some technical grades within the industry.

In terms of MAs within the electrical and plumbing industries:

- Out of JTL's 7,000 MA places, only 1% of apprentices are of BME origin and less than 1% are women;
- Employers in this sector do not see under-representation or lack of diversity as an issue;
- Employers have many pre-conceptions about who should come into the industry;
- There is no pressure from within the industry to address equal opportunities: e.g. the Electrical Contracting Association does not set equal opportunities targets.

Workshop discussion

The workshop discussion took place in two stages. The first part of the discussion aimed to identify and agree the key issues for addressing the employer agenda, while the second part focused on finding solutions to each issue. The workshop discussion and the feedback that was given at the plenary session by the workshop Chair, **David Boyer** from **London West LSC**, are summarised below.

Issues raised

- Employers are critical to making WBL successful; both through providing work placements and in helping to plan future provision by defining their workforce development needs. But it is clear that many employers do not see MAs as relevant to their business needs. A key issue, therefore, is not just how to encourage more employer placements for BME young

people but how to encourage greater employer engagement with the MA programme *per se*;

- There are a number of barriers to greater employer involvement, which all vocational learning providers and their funders must work to overcome. These include structural problems with the administration and content of MAs, including:
 - Additional bureaucracy for employers, particularly at application stage;
 - Fear amongst employers that newly trained staff will be poached by other companies;
 - The Key Skills and Technical Certificate elements, which are unpopular with many employers and apprentices.
- There are also problems of lack of knowledge and faith in the MA system amongst employers, including:
 - The MAs reputation for being of poor quality, which persists among many young people, employers, advisers and others in the community;
 - The continued inclination of employers to recruit people who have qualifications which they know and trust;
 - Community, school and parental resistance to MAs.
- It is not clear what proportion of young people are recruited onto MAs directly by employers; experience in some areas of the country suggests that it may be the majority of MA placements. The role of the LSC and MA providers in addressing gender, ethnicity and disability imbalances arising through direct employer recruitment needs to be more fully considered.

Solutions offered

- The LSC should consider how to tackle equality and diversity issues arising through direct employer recruitment onto MAs. This should include consideration of the LSC's power to use available legislative levers to root out and tackle cases of restrictive and discriminatory recruitment practices by MA providers that it engages with and the employers associated with them.
- A stronger business case in MAs needs to be made to employers. To encourage an increase in employer participation, which will open up opportunities for BME young people, the business case should be made most strongly to small businesses. Small businesses are the majority employers in urban areas, where most BME communities reside.
- The best business case to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) is that MAs provide an opportunity for employers to grow their own workforce, rather than grafting on an employee from elsewhere. Employers have much to gain by exercising a large amount of control (within the parameters of the apprentice framework) over the training an apprentice receives.
- SMEs can be overwhelmed by the complexities and costs that accompany an apprenticeship.

LSCs need to more actively promote the help and support which is available to help SMEs take on apprentices.

- MA providers are the brokers between employers and trainees. They have key responsibility for ensuring that equal opportunities and equal access are central to the processes of recruitment, selection and support. Providers have a responsibility to ensure that employers are supplied with apprentices who reflect the ethnic diversity of the area, and a responsibility to work with employers to overcome barriers to equality and diversity.
- Sector Skills Councils need to work with employers to promote greater understanding of the relevance and validity of MAs, NVQs and other qualifications which they may be unfamiliar with.
- The LSC and MA providers need to continue to improve the quality of MAs and to improve the marketing of them to overcome their reputation for poor quality.
- The LSC needs to address the funding structure which mitigates against the MA option for those aged 19 and over; the lack of progression to higher level learning; and the prevailing lack of very basic skills among MA recruits.

2.4 Embedding equality within Modern Apprenticeships and the LSC

Gaynor Field, Group Programme Manager for Work Based Learning at LSC National Office, gave a detailed presentation to the workshop on BME participation in WBL programmes and the LSC s strategic levers to achieve improvement, including:

- The strategic planning process - including EDIM, which allow local LSCs to establish local benchmarks for recruitment, retention and achievement of groups of learners and enables measurement of how effective policies and programmes are in achieving targets for specific learner groups;
- Monitoring, evaluation and review of equal opportunity performance - including the Provider Performance Review process;
- Ensuring funding systems do not disadvantage any group of learners or potential learners.

Stella Dadzie, a Race & Equalities Consultant from Front Line Training presented a series of key questions to the workshop:

- How should the LSC and its partners address the equalities agenda?
- What identified good practice can enable an organisation to achieve its objectives?
- How can good practice be benchmarked to ensure continuous improvement?
Stella presented the legislative context for equal opportunities and the statutory duties of the LSC as well as a range of good practice in ownership, management, monitoring, measuring progress and MA delivery.

Workshop discussion

The workshop discussion took place in two stages. The first part of the discussion aimed to identify and agree the key issues for embedding equality within MAs, while the second part focused on finding solutions to each issue.

The following is a summary of the workshop discussion and the feedback which was given at the plenary session by the workshop Chair, Jeremy Crook, Director of BTEG.

Issues raised

- There is a real challenge to achieve equality within WBL;
- Many apprentices are recruited through employers and it is difficult to influence the employer about who they put forward. Until this fundamental issue is addressed, it will be hard to improve BME participation;
- The number of BME young people on WBL programmes at local level is small, so retention and achievement terms by ethnicity are not statistically significant. The LSC should aggregate the figures and have a look at the wider picture and then look strategically at what can be done to improve participation, retention and outcome rates;
- One local LSC delegate felt the MA is a failing programme and for them this issue is fundamental to the completion of the revised MA Framework. NVQs and Key Skills do not provide the basis for attracting young people onto MAs and WBL is often seen as the poor relation ;
- There is a need to address attitude problems with particular vocational learning providers who are unwilling to address equality and diversity issues in a systematic way. All vocational learning providers need technical support to help interpret data that they collect from their WBL provision;

- Employers are good at induction stage with regards to equality and diversity, but poor in implementing good HR practice to improve participation and retention rates for BME learners;
- The Connexions service is an important part of the MA partnership framework and local LSCs need to communicate this more widely amongst employers and MA providers;
- One delegate asked if the MA Implementation Fund could be used for capacity building MA providers and employers on equality and diversity issues and, if possible, use this as a means to develop innovative solutions to address the race equality performance gaps on MA;
- Some delegates felt that employers are frightened of Positive Action. There needs to be more advice and training for MA stakeholders on Positive Action.

Solutions offered

- Engaging SMEs: there should be regular opportunities for meetings between the local LSC and SMEs to discuss WBL programmes.
- LSC National Office is the driver on equality and diversity issues and this needs to be championed more effectively through its local arms and the provision that they fund. All LSC staff need further training and support in order to implement race equality strategies effectively.
- The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) also have an important role in ensuring race equality is mainstreamed with LSC provider base. The starting point for ALI should be to address the ethos of the provider.
- Funding is the critical lever at the heart of the system and should influence the behaviour of MA stakeholders.
- There is a need to involve MA providers properly in tackling equality and diversity issues and local LSC contract managers and performance teams should be fully involved. These key local LSC staff must be trained to interpret data and suggest remedial action. Additionally, there needs to be greater contract follow-up and support to MA providers.
- Contract managers need capacity building to fully understand the LSC remit on equality and diversity issues, in particular race equality. The training that is currently available needs to be more robust and ongoing to stimulate continuous improvement.
- There should be mandatory workshops for MA providers on how to interpret participant data. It is positive to note that some local LSCs are discussing with MA providers the equality and diversity targets they are setting for themselves.

Achieving change is a long-term process.

Shifting cultures and attitudes to make a real change in the opportunities available to BME young people through WBL programmes needs to involve the young people themselves, their parents, teachers, role models, learning providers, the LSC, employers, schools, the youth service and many others. This, as David Hughes, Executive Director of LSC Derbyshire, told the Symposium, will be a long haul .

In terms of the LSC s role in achieving change, David Hughes highlighted some key areas for action:

- **Provider performance:** the LSC inherited a varied range of learning providers, from very good to very bad. The Provider Performance Review process is assessing the quality of performance and also of equality and diversity, both of which will drive up provider quality. The LSC needs to develop more confidence in weeding out poor performance.
- **Provider diversity:** developing new BME learning providers to deliver mainstream LSC programmes carries a large risk of setting BME learning organisations up to fail. LSC Derbyshire is successfully diversifying its provider base by adding specialist BME provision onto mainstream delivery.
- **Data:** the LSC is working from data sources which are incomplete in many cases and data analysis is often poor and unsophisticated. Data is frequently used to provide a snapshot rather than for longer term tracking of outcomes and progression. The LSC needs to improve the collection and analysis of information.
- **Local action:** the LSC structure enables both a national perspective and local action to work in tandem and it is action at local level that will make a real difference. For example, if 10 organisations in every local LSC area changed to become more inclusive of BME young people and each one recruited 10 extra BME young people onto NVQ learning, 10 extra BME young people onto Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and 4 extra BME young people onto Advanced Modern Apprenticeships, that would give 2,000 additional BME young people on AMAs, 5,000 on FMAs and 5,000 on NVQs - more than double the current number.

From the wide ranging discussions of the day, three issues emerged as key. Below is a summary of these three key issues, as expressed by the Symposium's speakers and delegates:

Data

- There is insufficient data on the longer-term outcomes for BME young people either completing WBL or dropping out early. Lack of information means that it is difficult to know what additional support might be needed to increase completion. Lack of information also means that BME young people who drop out are easily lost. There needs to be closer and longer term tracking of WBL participants;
- There are some discrepancies in the use and application of ethnic minority monitoring categories e.g. use of the other ethnic minority classification gives two different sets of figures on BME participation in WBL from the DfES and the LSC;
- Many WBL providers are very small, so retention and achievement trends by ethnicity are not statistically significant. The LSC needs to aggregate the figures to look at the bigger picture.

Employers

- Through target setting and performance review processes, the LSC can set targets for BME participation in WBL and ensure that contractors meet these but, the LSC currently has no control over individual employers directly recruiting apprentices;
- Local experience from delegates suggests that many employers have restrictive and discriminatory recruitment practices which affect the type of young person they are likely to choose as apprentices;
- The LSC needs to look closely at what legislative levers and influencing powers it can apply to address employer discrimination and to ensure that opportunities for young people are not adversely affected by restrictive recruitment and employment practices.

Progression

- Only 48% of BME young people completing WBL find jobs, compared with 72% of white young people. This is a poor incentive for BME young people;
- There is an urgent need to understand more clearly what happens to young people after they complete WBL programmes and to look at additional post-completion support which might be needed to ensure that BME young people are able to progress within their chosen careers, including progression onto higher level learning;
- There is a key role for the Sector Skills Councils to play in ensuring that all WBL is relevant to employer needs; helping employers to recognise and value vocational qualifications; and working to overcome restrictive recruitment and discriminatory employment practices which prevent BME young people from progressing.

The emphasis of the day s event was on practical action; the need for this was emphasised by all the speakers and workshop discussion focused on identifying actions to address the key issues raised.

Most of the actions identified by the Symposium were aimed at the organisations represented by the delegates and speakers themselves; the LSC at both national and local levels, the Sector Skills Councils, Connexions Partnerships and WBL providers. These actions are summarised below in the form of proposed actions for each of the key agencies to consider.

Proposed actions for LSC National Office

The LSC should consider how to tackle equality and diversity issues arising through direct employer recruitment onto MAs. This should include consideration of the LSC s power to use available legislative levers to root out and tackle cases of restrictive and discriminatory recruitment practices by employers.

There needs to be continued improvement of data collection and analysis, particularly in longer term tracking of progression and outcomes, including BME young people who drop out of LSC-funded provision.

The LSC should develop and publish a policy statement setting out its commitment to diversifying the provider base and detailing ways in which local LSCs can achieve this, including encouraging sub-contracting arrangements through which BME learning providers are sub-contracted to deliver specialist services.

The LSC should consider piloting a Positive Action approach in key sub-regions to develop more BME providers to compete for mainstream delivery contracts.

The LSC needs to address the funding structure which mitigates against the MA option for those aged 19 and over; the lack of progression to higher level learning; and the prevailing lack of very basic skills among MA recruits.

Proposed actions for the local LSCs

The profile of the provider base should be a separate Equality and Diversity Impact Measure (EDIM) for each local area to ensure that this is monitored, reviewed and addressed where necessary. A related EDIM for diversity within each provider organisation would also help to shape employers attitudes to diversity and equality.

More effort needs to be made in promoting the business case in MAs to employers. The Small Business Service and local Chambers of Commerce should also assist in this role.

Local LSCs need to more actively promote the help and support which is available to help SMEs

take on apprentices and in doing so, seek to improve the image and quality of MAs.

Local LSCs should consider brokering local delivery consortia involving a range of large and small providers e.g. colleges and small BME learning providers delivering different elements of WBL.

Mentoring support needs to be made available between mainstream learning providers and BME providers.

Local LSCs should ensure comprehensive involvement of BME learning providers in local provider networks and effective representation on Local Learning Partnerships.

Proposed actions for MA providers

Providers have a responsibility to ensure that employers are supplied with apprentices who reflect the ethnic diversity of the area, and a responsibility to work with employers to overcome barriers to equality and diversity.

Proposed actions for Sector Skills Councils

Sector Skills Councils need to work with employers to overcome their continued inclination to only recruit people with qualifications that they know and trust. SSCs need to work with employers to develop better pathways for BME young people from MA to full-time careers in their chosen industry.

Proposed actions for Connexions and youth agencies

Effective promotion of MAs needs to take place on young people's territory; in youth clubs, schools, etc.

Young people and their parents need to be provided with better information about MAs and other vocational learning options — information which is aimed at empowering them to ask the right questions and to take a proactive part in deciding about their own future.

The expectations of BME young people need to be raised, and from a much earlier age. Work needs to begin with primary school age children to develop their aspirations, raise awareness and to give positive information about WBL options.