Voices of the underrepresented

What's stopping young Black men getting on in the digital and construction sectors?

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

The Workforce Integration Network

In 2018, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, launched the Workforce Integration Network (WIN). It is part of his Strategy for Social Integration and aims to change the way businesses in London function. The programme is laying the foundations for a more diverse workforce by helping employers tackle the underrepresentation of different groups of Londoners.

In its first phase, the WIN programme is supporting young Black men aged 16 to 24 to access good-quality employment in the digital and construction sectors and progress once they're in it. This report is part of the evidence base giving us a nuanced understanding of the specific challenges young Black men face in these sectors.

You can learn more about the programme and contact the team by visiting:
www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/workforce-integration-network-win

Deputy Mayor's foreword

The events of 2020 are ones that will shape our city for years to come. We have lived through truly challenging and defining times. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the deep-seated inequality that continues to sit at the heart our city, weaving its way through how we live and work. The Black Lives Matter movement speaks truth to power. In London, it has driven home the real impact that structural racism continues to have on the lives of Black Londoners.

The voices of young Black men in this report tell an important story – one of undue hardship and discrimination, but also of advancing against the odds. I am determined to tackle these inequalities and build a fairer and more socially integrated city. The ability to access and progress in good-quality work plays an important role in this. This is why, as part of his Strategy for Social Integration, the Mayor launched the Workforce Integration Network – specifically aimed at addressing underrepresentation in London's workplaces.

Young Black men in our city are hugely driven and talented, yet they experience one of the highest unemployment rates in London – more than double that of their White male peers. It stands at a shocking 33 per cent compared to 15 per cent among young White men, and disparities persist across education levels.

What is clear in this report is that structural barriers permeate the workplace – and London's business leaders have a critical role to play in breaking them down.

This timely report now sets out the challenge we face in tackling these inequalities and begins to draw up a vision for a way forward. I am clear that we must take urgent action on the unique structural barriers faced by young Black men and that this will only be possible through working together. We cannot continue business as usual – the time for action is now.

The recommendations laid out here, and in the complimentary *inclusive employers toolkit*, will support you to build workplaces that are inclusive and representative of young Black men, and will benefit other groups too. At City Hall, we plan to lead from the front by ensuring that both the Greater London Authority and Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime implement the actions outlined in the *inclusive employers toolkit*.

The digital and construction sectors are vital parts of London's economy – and both have an important role to play in London's recovery. As we build back better, at City Hall we challenge you to seize this opportunity to channel the brilliant innovation and creativity of your respective sectors and lead the way for others. I urge you to put tackling these inequalities at the heart of your strategies. At City Hall the Workforce Integration Network will support your efforts.

Finally, I want to thank the young Black men who have shared their stories and their insights in the hope of shifting the dial towards greater equality. City Hall hears you and we will continue to take action to break down the structural barriers you face. Together, we will build a workforce that truly reflects London's brilliant diversity.

Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard
Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement

Executive summary

Young Black men face some of the highest unemployment rates in London – a shocking 33 per cent compared to 15 per cent for young White men. Recent rises in educational attainment have not addressed these disparities. It is clear that many key players, from parents to policymakers, have a role to play in coming together to tackle these issues.

Whilst work has been done to understand and address the structural inequalities facing Black Londoners – less has been done to highlight the role of employers in making their workplace more inclusive for young Black men.

This research, conducted by the Runnymede Trust, was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to illustrate to employers the obstacles that stop young Black men in the workplace, and how they can address them. It focuses on the digital and construction sectors which see significant underrepresentation of young Black men. The report sits complimentary to the *inclusive employers toolkit*, a step by step guide supporting employers to take action on representation and inclusion of young Black men.

Employers in London's digital or construction sector can play a central role in challenging the fundamental inequalities that divide our city. They can help break down the structural barriers that make it harder for young Black men to join the workforce, and more difficult to progress once they're part of it.

This report was researched and written prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, but the pandemic – and its disproportionate effect on Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners – has brought into sharp focus the urgent need for employers, among others, to tackle inequality in London's labour market. It is based on in-depth interviews with 27 young Black men working in the digital and construction sectors, and a small sample of employers. Broken down into six themes, it uses young men's voices and experiences to unpick and analyse key parts of a system that prevents talent and potential from flourishing.

Whilst the report focuses on the role of employers, its findings are important and can inform action for many others including families, schools, policymakers and civil society.

Due to the innovative nature of this work, there were few case studies of interventions targeting young Black men specifically. This report features some examples of programmes being used to address discrimination against Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees in the workplace, which can be adapted to support young Black men.

Key findings

From lower employer expectations about their potential, to biased recruitment processes, to unequal pay and prospects for progression – this report finds young Black men are navigating a system that stacks the odds against them.

A reoccurring and significant issue is the lack of trust in young Black men. This appears to arise during applications, interviews, in their day-to-day work and when it comes to gaining promotions. When a complaint was made against them, young Black employees felt they were often not given the benefit of the doubt or accorded the opportunity to explain. This represents a pernicious barrier to their progress, happiness and success in employment.

Overall, the findings reveal that negative experiences within workplaces are common and often similar. There is significant room for improvement and it is time for employers to listen to what young Black men have to say. The report found:

1. Early negative perceptions

The tech and construction sectors are rarely first-choice careers for young Black men because of a complex myriad of factors:
- Myths and stereotypes about what people in tech or construction should 'look like', thanks mainly to a lack of Black role models in either sector.
- The expectations of communities, parents and employers on career paths for young Black men.

2. The transition from education to employment

Young Black men face particular disadvantages when making the transition from education to employment, which mean they're more likely to lack the networks, social capital and soft skills needed to find a good job.

3. Barriers to recruitment

Every stage of the recruitment process tends to be biased against them:
- CVs with 'foreign-sounding' names are less likely to be shortlisted.
- Recruiters tend to believe that 'culture fit' is about 'hiring people like me' rather than recruiting people who match the organisation's values.
- A frequent lack of diversity on interview panels.

4. Inequalities in pay and career progression

A glass-ceiling blocks the career progression of many young Black men. They have to work harder to build trust with their employers, and are less likely to be given the responsibilities that would lead to promotions and pay rises. As a result, many are paid less and progress more slowly than their White peers. Some even leave the sectors.

5. Non-inclusive workplace cultures

From under-representation, to microaggressions and stereotyping, to racist 'banter', to overt discrimination – the research shows that often dominant tech and construction workplace culture can leave young Black men isolated and disillusioned.

6. A lack of monitoring or evaluation

Most companies say they want to build a more diverse workplace, but don't have detailed data on their current diversity levels and don't put in place the monitoring and evaluation processes needed to deliver successful interventions. These are set out in detail in Chapter 8.

Recommendations

To address workplace inequalities, companies need to remove bias in 'systems and processes' – not only people – across each of these six areas. Our recommendations for employers are:

1. Challenge negative perceptions

- Develop early targeted interventions that reach out to school-age Black children through community or school engagement programmes, and use young Black role models to challenge the prevailing perceptions of your industries.

2. Ease education to employment

- Provide access to good-quality work experience that blends on-the-job learning with employability training, tailored to address barriers faced by young Black men

- Develop targeted recruitment support and career advice at key transition points between education and employment

3. Break down barriers to recruitment

- Widen recruitment channels through targeted graduate, apprenticeship and outreach schemes aimed at young Black men

- Use recognised good practice in inclusive recruitment

- Commit to more transparency about the challenges faced by your business when recruiting

- Test and evaluate your organisation's existing cultural values and biases, then make adjustments to become more open to a more diverse pool of candidates

- Explicitly explain the recruitment process to prospective applicants, including how discrimination and bias is challenged at each stage

- Aim to have more Black men involved in your recruitment processes by increasing their presence at senior levels

- Require diverse shortlists ahead of moving to interview stage

4. Tackle inequalities in progression and pay

- Use standardised instruments to determine an organisation's or team's values, so you can better determine whether a candidate is a culture fit

- Conduct an equal-pay audit and produce an equal-pay policy and action plan to tackle any ethnic pay gap

- Collaborate with initiatives that support the development and retention of young Black professionals across the tech and construction industries

5. Build inclusive cultures

- Produce line-management guidance on acceptable behaviour in the workplace and training to help managers support employees' cultural and religious practices

- Develop a policy to tackle racial discrimination and microaggressions in the workplace

- Move towards a holistic 'organisational responsibility' approach to build a more diverse workforce that's strategic and led by management teams

6. Better monitoring and evaluation

- Regularly collect, evaluate and publish disaggregated ethnicity data

- Conduct regular anonymised staff surveys

Conclusion

The findings highlight the many barriers young Black men face in the digital and construction sectors. These barriers are not inevitable or acceptable.

London's digital and construction companies are world renowned for their innovation and creativity. Yet too many are overlooking and excluding young Black men, and missing out on their talent and drive.

The recommendations set out above offer tangible steps employers can take to improve recruitment, retention and progression in their organisations. Through the commitment, support and leadership of businesses, we can create a fairer city and ensure London's workforce truly reflects its diverse communities.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Why read this report?

Employers in London's digital or construction sector have a central role to play in building a fairer, more socially integrated city. They can help break down the structural barriers that make it harder for young Black men to join the workforce, and more difficult to progress once they're part of it.

This report, commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and researched by the Runnymede Trust, will explore why young Black men are so underrepresented in London's tech and construction workforce. It will also look at how those who do find work in either sector come up against discrimination and barriers that hinder their progression.

It explores how talented and ambitious young Black men grow up with negative perceptions of the digital and construction sectors – and how employers can change them. It sheds light on how recruitment practices are often biased against young Black men – and how they can be made fairer. It reveals the direct and indirect discrimination young Black men face in the workplace – and how businesses can build more inclusive cultures. It sits complimentary to the *inclusive employers toolkit,* a step by step guide supporting employers take action on representation and inclusion of young Black men.

Three years on from Baroness McGregor-Smith's independent review of the working lives of Black and minority ethnic groups, this report provides a timely exploration of the structural barriers that Black Londoners still face in accessing and progressing in quality employment.

It uniquely centres the voices of young Black men throughout and focuses on their experiences in the technology and construction industries to highlight sector specific barriers. It draws out key connections between their experiences and the role of employers in increasing representation and inclusion of young black men.

The report was researched and written prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, but the pandemic – and its disproportionate effect on Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners – has brought into
sharp focus the urgent need for employers, amongst others, to tackle inequality in London's labour market.

The report is based on in-depth interviews with 27 young Black men working in the digital and construction sectors, and a small sample of employers. Broken down into six key themes, it uses young men's voices and experiences to unpick and analyse key parts of a system that prevents talent and potential from flourishing. It includes 15 recommendations for how you, as an employer, can tackle these barriers. It also provides examples of effective interventions already being used to reduce discrimination against Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the workplace, which can often be adapted to target young Black men.

First, some stark statistics that illustrate why we need to focus on young Black men.

1.2 Why we need to focus on young Black men

Young Black men make up

4%
of young men in
construction[1]

5%
of young men in
technology[2]

18%
of young men in
London overall[3]

As a group, young Black men are at the intersection of a number of characteristics that tend to disadvantage people in the labour market. Further, young Black men face specific and pernicious stereotypes even after entering the workplace.
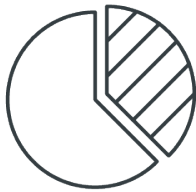
Young Londoners consistently struggle to get jobs in the region.

In London the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds is **16.1 per cent** compared to **4.8 per cent** for the working age population.[4]

Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners have higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity than other ethnic groups.

Young Black male Londoners have one of the highest unemployment rates among young people of all other ethnic groups – **33 per cent** compared to **15 per cent** for young White men.[5]
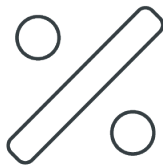
Unemployment disparities persist across qualification levels.

Black graduate unemployment stands at **13 per cent** compared to **4 per cent** for White graduates.[6]

[1] Census, 2011.
[2] Ibid.
[3] GLA ethnic group population projections – 2020 projection.
[4] Office for National Statistics, 2019a. *Quarterly Unemployment statistics April 2019-March 2020*.
[5] Office for National Statistics, Social Survey Division, 2020. *Annual Population Survey, January - December, 2019*
[6] GOV.UK, 2020. *Graduate Labour Market Statistics, 2019*.

And unemployment is just one issue disproportionately affecting young Black men. Many also face underemployment (working fewer hours than they want), under-utility (working in jobs below their qualification levels), low wages and a lack of job security.

This report aims to help you understand the many barriers young Black men face, both in breaking into London's construction and technology sectors and thriving once they do so. Alongside the *inclusive employers toolkit*, it will help you effectively address those obstacles, so that more young Black men get the chance to forge fruitful careers. In doing so you'll be helping to address the fundamental inequalities that divide our city.

As the boxes below show, you'll also be upholding equal rights legislation, and building a more successful business.

Upholding equal rights

Ethnic inequalities in the labour market are longstanding.[7] However, employers are now more aware of the UK population's increasing diversity, and the need to address the underrepresentation of certain groups.

This is a matter of equal rights under the UK's race relations legislation. The 2010 Equalities Act forbids discrimination, whether direct or indirect, on the grounds of 'protected characteristics', including race. In 2000, the new public sector duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act established how public bodies and institutions should address issues around inequality.

Public bodies, including businesses, are required by law to consider the impact of their policies, choices and procedures – proactively rather than reactively – on different groups of people.

The business case for diversity

There is also a compelling business case for building diverse workforces. Research by management consultants McKinsey & Company[8] based on a set of 366 companies revealed a statistically significant connection between diversity and financial performance. The top quartile companies in terms of diversity were 35 per cent more likely to perform above the median financially. Read more about the benefits for your business in the *inclusive employers toolkit.*

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[7] Li, 2014. *Ethnic unemployment in Britain (1972 – 2012)*
[8] McKinsey & Company, 2015. *Diversity Matters.*

1.3 Methodology

The evidence underpinning this report's findings was drawn from three sources:

1. A qualitative research project, recruiting and interviewing 27 young Black men (16-30) at different stages of employment in London's construction and digital sectors.

2. A literature review, gathering examples of innovative employment practices from employers across various sectors. These practices were identified through online desk research, which included existing academic, government and third sector reports.

3. A qualitative research piece interviewing a small sample of employers from a range of sectors across London about recruiting and integrating young Black men into their workforce.

Do note, this research is not a comprehensive review of employers' inclusion good-practices. Neither does it evaluate how effective those practices are. There were also limits to the range of opinions of staff and employers that could be covered here. This research does highlight the range and complexity of overt and subtle barriers faced by young Black men in the construction and digital sectors. Moreover, it shows that improving recruitment from under-represented groups isn't enough. More must be done to address the major barriers that exist within the workplace.

Appendix A provides more detail on the methodology used in this research.

Chapter 2
Expectations of young Black men from communities, parents and employers

"There's not a lot of investment in Black men working in technology. I think that's because Black men have always been associated with more creative industries. When you look at music and art for instance, they've always been associated with those industries in the same way that Asian men have always been more associated with STEM-related subjects. If you are always told something your whole life, you sort of start to believe it. [...] "

Black African male,
Engineering Manager,
Chief Technology Officer,
30, Digital

Some important reasons young Black men are underrepresented in the tech and construction sectors stem from early life experiences. A complex web of personal, cultural and economic constraints shapes young Black men's career decisions – and tend to direct them away from tech and construction. As an employer, you can help change this – by engaging earlier, with deeper and more rounded approaches.

2.1 Negative perceptions

For many of our interviewees, digital or construction were not their first choice of career. They tended to stumble upon these sectors later, as they moved from one job to another. Typically, they didn't consider careers in those industries as an option growing up because of off-putting realities or perceptions, including:

- a lack of ethnic diversity and visible role-models in the sectors

- the related impression of having to be the first to forge a path in a sector and open doors

- the widely held idea that digital is a career for White, middle class people – or for 'geeks'

- that these sectors are not financially lucrative enough, especially for those that feel the pressure of supporting their parents and families as well as themselves

- the fact these sectors don't correlate with traditional ideals of success among their communities, such as becoming a doctor, lawyer or engineer, or other popular aspirations, such as becoming a musician or professional footballer.

2.2 Lack of role models

The interviewees frequently cited the highly visible presence of successful young Black male role models in entertainment and sport – in sharp contrast with the lack of such figures in construction and technology.

> **"For a lot of us in the Black community, our options in terms of what we aspire to tend to be limited. Football is quite big amongst us or going into music. It presents a barrier in some instances because your mind is clogged with only a few avenues you can go down in life."**
> Black Caribbean male, Software Engineer, 26, Digital

> **"There aren't enough publicised Black tech successes, particularly in engineering. […] Would I have gotten into tech if it didn't happen the way it did for me [a colleague taught him coding]? It didn't seem like something that was for me because the stigma around programmers being geeks and all of that, that wasn't me."**
> Black Caribbean male, Software Developer, 27, Digital

> **"You go where you can see yourself. A reason why many ethnic minority people, Black men in particular, don't go to tech is because they don't see themselves in it. It's hard to be inspired to try to do all that. You feel like you have to be the first. I've always been one to try and go to a place and open the door for the next ethnic person behind me."**
> Black African male, Tech Consultant, Graduate Scheme, 25, Digital

> **"You don't see many people of colour working in construction. They are moving towards recruiting more on site, but there is still a lack of awareness of the industry and fewer BAME people in managerial positions."**
> Black African male, Employment Co-ordinator, 23, Construction

2.3 Lack of encouragement or resources

Some of our interviewees said they were always interested in these sectors growing up, but weren't encouraged by their parents, schools, communities or prospective employers. The importance of such encouragement was highlighted by other interviewees. They described how being encouraged by parents to take more STEM and academic subjects, along with mentoring and support at school, were what made them forge careers in the digital or construction sectors.

> **"I had parents who promote education quite a lot so that was always at the back of my mind. Even while I was playing football, I studied A-levels, in the event that football didn't work out, I could go to university and open doors for myself."**
> Black Caribbean male, Software Engineer, 26, Digital

> **"Your environment inspires you. I went to a very good school and found out I was good at computers and coding in the last two years of school. I went to a grammar private school for sixth form. […] I had mentors in schools, teachers who refused to give up on me."**
> Black African male, Director of his own start-up, 26, Digital

With Black families facing significant economic inequality[9], some of our interviewees said that when they were growing up they lacked the digital resources/equipment to help set them up for a career in digital:

> **"We grew up poor, so we didn't have the internet in my house until I was 14. I didn't start programming until I was 17 so I got into tech pretty late."**
> Black African male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

2.4 What employers can do

Challenge myths and expectations

Our interviewees told us that employers could do more to attract young Black men to pursue careers in tech and construction. They can break myths and stereotypes that their industries are suitable only to certain groups of people or particular skill-sets.

As an employer, you can intervene early, reaching Black children at school open days or visits with messages that challenge and shape expectations about your industries. Develop and test ways to engage with parents – who play such a central role in shaping young people's aspirations – through community, church or school networks and other touchpoints. Review your existing outreach work, too, and explore how it might be adapted to more effectively engage with Black school-aged children and their parents.

You can challenge media portrayals of what someone who works in tech or construction 'looks like' – through a range of methods, from using young Black role models to engage directly with school-age children during your outreach work, to changing the imagery on your website to reflect the diversity of your workforce. You can promote the exciting career opportunities technology or construction offer young Black men, and emphasise how these sectors need their talent.

If you're a digital employer you could expand the opportunities for children, especially from disadvantaged families, to engage with tech and coding during community-level outreach at schools, community centres, libraries and universities, for example.

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[9] Khan, 2020. *The Colour of Money.*

Chapter 3
The transition from education to employment

"The UK is a very difficult job market so any support that can be made to people that are unemployed is good. I think more should be done. A lot of what I know now, in terms of getting a job, wasn't easily available information. I had to find it out through friends' research."

Black African male,
Project Engineer in the Transport Sector,
26, Digital

Making the leap from education to the world of work can be especially difficult if you're a young Black male. As an employer, you can build a more diverse workforce by helping young Black men successfully navigate that transition.

Most of the employees we interviewed mentioned various hurdles they faced in between completing their education and starting to look for work. Structural inequalities they faced often meant they lacked the social networks, social capital and soft skills necessary to find good-quality employment.

3.1 Lack of support in transitioning from university to work

Many interviewees spoke about the barriers they faced when navigating the transition from university to work. They were often the first generation in their family to go to university, so they tended to lack the confidence and interview skills necessary to acquire graduate jobs:

> **"That initial step from finishing uni to work is underestimated or there was never any ground laid to transition well – no internships before you get to the work world, not knowing exactly how to approach that transition. Most of us, our parents didn't go to uni. For you to understand how to go from a student in marketing, IT, construction to actually working and understanding the intricacies of the recruitment system, they need a bit of help when it comes to the actual transition."**
> Black Caribbean male, Business Territory Manager, 26, Digital

Some felt it was exacerbated by companies recruiting from "certain universities", relying on existing networks or advertising through channels not generally used by young Black men.

> **"A previous employer did a lot of university outreach, but it was targeted at universities that were known not to be diverse. They had huge university connections in towns that were very White. It's weird you could run a company in central London and all the faces are White – it doesn't make sense."**
> Black Arab male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

> **"I know we are talking about race, but it goes into more social economic discussions around class. There are certain companies where if you haven't come from this university or you don't know this type of individual, they would never look at you."**
> Black African male, Engineering Manager, Chief Technology Officer, 30, Digital

Some employers were identified as not making proactive or sincere efforts to recruit diverse workforces. Interviewees said tokenistic gestures of bringing Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees to university fairs or having photos of Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees in brochures didn't reflect the workplace reality:

> **"X [company's name] was one of the employers that attracted me because it has a history of diversity and that's quite prominent in its promotional material. When they came to my university, quite a few of the graduates and interns they brought with them were ethnic minorities so I just thought it would be more diverse […] But coming in with my graduate intake, out of 150 graduates, I think there are only three Black guys, maybe one or two Black girls and a couple of other minorities but the vast majority is White and typically middle-class and it's quite a disconnect."**
> Black African, Technology Consultant, Graduate Scheme, 25, Digital

3.2 Lack of soft skills and social capital

Many of the young Black men we interviewed were first exposed to a professional environment only after completing higher education. They felt they lacked the work experience or the soft skills – like interview techniques, network-building or social capital – to get a job and succeed in the world of work.

> **"They have the degrees, but it's the soft skills they lack: how to talk in interviews, how to do presentations in interviews, how to use language, etc. If you don't have the networks, or the work experience, you don't know these things. So you don't do well in interviews".**
> Black Caribbean male, Tech Company Founder and Employer, 25, Digital

3.3 Good practice examples

Work experience placements like Berkeley Group's Street Elite programme (below) which include employability skills training, can help young Black men make the transition from education to good-quality employment.

CASE STUDY
Street Elite

The construction company Berkeley Group runs an award-winning programme called Street Elite. It is aimed at young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) – a group that includes a disproportionate number of young Black men. Now in its sixth year, Street Elite provides young men with work experience and mentoring to help them get a feel for working in construction. It accepts people with criminal records and acknowledges that the young men's home life and personal circumstances can affect their performance and how well they adjust. The programme's evaluation cites an 83 per cent success rate in helping participants move into employment.

CASE STUDY
Movement to Work

Movement to Work is a charity coalition of the UK's leading employers, civil society and government, focusing on unemployed young people aged 16-24. It aims to get 50 per cent of young people into work or studying. It supports employers to provide work placements that combine employability skills training with on-the-job experience. Movement to Work suggests that these programmes can produce a "sustainable talent pipeline of young people, increasing diversity and improving a company's reputation".[10] The high unemployment levels among young Black men tend to mean they are more likely to benefit from such schemes.

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[10] Movement to Work, 2019. *About the Movement.*

Several employers we interviewed also ran their own work experience schemes, apprenticeships and internships, which people without degrees could join.

These programmes resonate with some of Joseph Rowntree Foundation's key proposals to improve employment prospects for young people in London.[11] These include:

- making face-to-face careers advice and guidance available to young people from the age of 13

- extending current initiatives to increase ethnic, socioeconomic and gender diversity among young people entering apprenticeships and other routes into skilled work

- developing in-work support – access to advice, job-matching services and discretionary funds – for young people and others in low-paid jobs to encourage progression.

3.4 What employers can do

Work experience, internships and apprenticeships
Provide access to quality work experience that blends on-the-job learning with employability training, tailored to address the barriers faced by young Black men. You can be proactive in providing more internship and work-experience opportunities with "accessible places" that target particular groups that are underrepresented in your workforce. This aligns with positive action measures permitted under the Equality Act 2010 (see the *inclusive employers toolkit* for more information). This can bridge the gap between education and employment, building experience and exposure.

It can help them grow networks, enhance their CV and equip them with the soft skills they need to make it through the recruitment process. It can remove barriers to access – by accepting people without formal qualifications, for example.

You can run diversity-promoting internships – like the #100BlackInterns scheme, which is designed to kick-start Black people's careers in investment management.

You should aim to monitor, evaluate and publish data on whether your schemes successfully provide gateways into work for a more diverse range of employees. See Chapter 7 for more on Monitoring and Evaluation.

Recruitment support and career advice
Develop targeted recruitment support and career advice for young Black men at key transition points between education and employment. Look beyond your usual recruitment networks and universities, and seek out those attended by a higher proportion of young Black men.

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[11] Hughes and Crowley, 2014. *London: A Tale of Two Cities: Addressing the youth employment challenge.*

Chapter 4
Recruitment and beyond

"**The company is majority White with three or four Black people, at least in the area I work in. It doesn't have an HR department so there's no active process for hiring more BAME people. I don't think they are to blame entirely – this is an industry-wide issue.**"

Black European, 23, Construction

Young Black men keen to forge careers in London's digital and construction industries often find the odds stacked against them when they come to apply for work. This is neither inevitable or acceptable – and your business can help change it.

Our interviews highlighted examples of direct and indirect discrimination experienced by young Black jobseekers. This chapter aims to bring to light the ways this discrimination shows up during the application and interview stages, and how it can be reduced.

4.1 CVs and shortlisting biases

> **"If you have a name of African descent, most recruiters and hiring managers already have a wall up because your name isn't John Smith."**
> Black African male, Engineering Manager, Chief Technology Officer, 30, Digital

There is much evidence of overt discrimination at the shortlisting stage of job recruitment. A 2009 Department for Work and Pensions research report[12] found people with Asian- or African-sounding surnames sent in nearly twice as many CVs as White candidates to get an interview. A more recent major academic study[13] across five countries revealed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds send between 60-90 per cent more CVs than White British candidates to get a call back.

The more intersectional disadvantages you have – for example, being young, Black, Muslim – the less likely you are to land an interview. Shockingly, the study also found that the odds of getting a call back for different ethnic-minority groups have not changed much since 1967 – despite all the equalities legislation enacted since then. It also revealed that 'indirect' discrimination or 'unconscious bias' are not the only barriers for ethnic-minority candidates in the labour market. Overt discrimination still exists, with employers not shortlisting equally qualified candidates for an interview *solely* based on their surname or CV photo. These findings were supported by some of the employers we interviewed:

> **"We have worked with the same [recruitment] agency for the past 20 years, who send us the same type of CVs and same people every time. They discriminate against Black people because they think that's the kind of employees we don't want. We are doing training with them to increase diversity and make sure we get varied applicants from them."**
> Private construction company, 2,500 employees

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[12] Wood et al., 2009. *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities.*
[13] Di Stasio and Heath, 2019. *Are employers in Britain discriminating against ethnic minorities? Summary of findings from the GEMM project.*

The disadvantage in the job market of having a "foreign-sounding name" was a common theme among the young Black men interviewed. Many pointed out that African- or Muslim-sounding names were more likely to be discriminated against by employers:

> **"I know the ins and outs of the recruitment industry and I know how to navigate myself when it comes to recruiters. Would I say I have directly received discrimination? I would definitely. I think it's worst for people from African heritage because those from Caribbean heritage have quite English-sounding names. So naturally people will discriminate and that's not necessarily – I would say – the recruiters' fault. The whole hiring process is really broken because coming from that recruitment background, you've got hiring managers that will turn around and say to you: I only want to hire an English person."**
> Black African male, Engineering Manager, Chief Technology Officer, 30, Digital

The interviews showed that concern about 'name bias' meant some men set their expectations lower or assumed they wouldn't be selected. If there is a perception among young Black men that they will be discriminated against during a recruitment process they are a lot less likely to apply. Even wording of job adverts can be a deterrent from applying.

> **"I believe even the way we write our job descriptions can be off-putting for many, as often there are many requirements and the level of security clearance can turn away potential candidates. […]"**
> National public sector organisation, 2,000 employees

The 2017 Lammy Review highlighted that young Black men are disproportionately penalised by the criminal justice system.[14] Application forms tend to ask about criminal records and some employers implement blanket exclusions on ex-offenders, denying some Black men any chance of even reaching interview stage.

4.2 Interview barriers

The interview stage of the recruitment process is particularly problematic for young Black men. It is where serious biases – conscious or unconscious – can play a significant role. Many of our interviewees felt judged to a "harsher standard" and not given "the benefit of the doubt" if they made errors. During interviews they said they had to navigate unspoken assumptions and stereotypes. Some of the men spoke about making "an extra effort" in the interview phase to be seen as "equal to your White counterpart":

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[14] The Lammy Review, 2017. *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System.*

> **"Rather than just showing you have the skills for the job, you have to show you would be someone they would want to go for a drink with, which is often easier when you look like them. It's tough but someone has to go and break the ice so it's easier for the [BAME] people coming behind us."**
> Black African male, Technology Consultant, Graduate Scheme, 25, Digital

> **"I've been to a lot of interviews where I've been the ideal person for the role, they'll tell me you have a great CV, you have the experience but you're not a 'culture fit'. And they just leave it at that. When you question it, they'll be very vague."**
> Black African male, Director of his Design and Development Agency, 23, Digital

Some employees said stereotypes about Black men make it harder for them to succeed in interviews.

> **"For a lot of Black men, it's the way we talk, the language barrier. You talk a certain way, it's us trying to hide our identity. And you hear the common phrase: 'talk normal'. There's no universal way to talk, but you are told to talk 'normally'."**
> Black African male, Customer Manager, Director of his own start-up, 26, Digital

One interviewee who regularly sits in on interview panels said employers often want people who they perceive will fit in, especially if the workforce is small:

> **"When I think about the interview process I was part of, if you have just one group of people that think or do certain things together, they always look for someone who fits into that because it's such a small environment and you just want your mates. That stops people from being able to break in, because you're from a different background and it's harder for them to be comfortable."**
> Black African male, Business Territory Manager, 26, Digital

Recruiters often think 'culture fit' is about 'hiring people like me' rather than recruiting people who match the organisation's values. Hiring on the latter basis does not have to harm diversity at all. If culture fit is important, employers should use standardised instruments to compare the organisation's or team's values with those of the candidate – adding a standard section in interviews that asks values-based questions, for example.[15]

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[15] Hofmans and Judge, 2019. *Hiring for Culture Fit Doesn't Have to Undermine Diversity.*

Another barrier already highlighted is the lack of diversity among the people in charge of recruitment, and among the networks, institutions and organisations they recruit from. The employers interviewed remarked on how the lack of representation at senior level makes it challenging to recruit young Black men to join the industry.

4.3 What employers can do

Follow recognised recruitment best-practice
Most government reviews and large business-led research on increasing diversity have highlighted some good basic recruitment practice, which should be standard in organisations. Some of those practices include:

- Removing personal information from CVs, such as names, gender and the name of the school or university attended.
- Setting up diverse interview panels to reduce unconscious bias
- Having a range of people assessing CVs, including staff at same level of seniority as the job role. This ensures a broad set of perspectives on an applicant's suitability.[16]
- Paying attention to the wording of job advertisements to avoid discouraging or excluding specific groups.
- Partnering with organisations (such as those listed in chapter 5, p35) whose focus is on improving workplace diversity.
- Advertising jobs on inclusive platforms like social media, Black, Asian and minority ethnic publications or job fairs outside of universities.
- Practising transparent decision-making around recruitment and promotion.

Widen recruitment channels
Use targeted graduate, apprenticeship and outreach schemes aimed at young Black men. This involves consistently reaching out to groups or student societies that have a higher proportion of young Black male members. It means reaching out to a more diverse range of educational institutions to find talent, and using niche outlets to advertise vacancies.

> **"I'll use Y [a company's name] as an example of best practice. They try to reach out to Afro-Caribbean societies in terms of their recruitment. They sponsor a couple of universities, they go to events, they walk the walk and talk the talk whereas X [a different company's name], they just lean on their history of diversity and use some of their well-known ethnic superstars to highlight their marketing and promotion rather than making an effort to find more [BAME people]. I feel like they are just used as figures on a campaign."**
> Black African male, Technology Consultant, 25, Digital

[16] Robert Walters Whitepaper, 2017. *Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment.*

Alongside the more obvious recruitment fairs at universities, some employees we interviewed mentioned engaging with African-Caribbean societies at universities as a potential avenue for recruitment.

Diversify senior staff

Aim to have more Black men involving in your recruitment processes by increasing their presence at senior levels and bringing in external representatives. That means reviewing your internal promotion practices, introducing talent management schemes or headhunting Black men specifically for senior roles. That way, young Black men can see careers in these sectors are open to them too.

Reduce shortlisting biases

As mentioned, there are several basic practices that help circumvent shortlisting bias, such as removing personal information from CVs. But these do not tackle the more deeply rooted causes of discrimination in the recruitment process.

A more proactive approach is what has become known as the **'Rooney Rule'** – a policy first introduced by the National Football League (NFL) in America that requires NFL teams to interview ethnic-minority candidates for head coaching and other senior roles. It has since been tested by prominent tech companies like Facebook and Pinterest to ensure that at least one Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidate whose application meets the advertised requirements for the role is shortlisted for interview. Research has found that the Rooney Rule has helped change the NFL's culture of hiring and increase diversity.[17]

Employers might also consider more proactive practices, such as not moving to interview without a diverse shortlist. This recommendation is not about putting forward unqualified candidates. It is about acknowledging your recruitment network's limitations and how bias affects shortlisting, and that without a diverse shortlist, you won't hire employees from more diverse backgrounds.

Minimise interview barriers

Employers should move away from using unstructured interviews. Aside from the biases they tend to promote, research has shown they are some of the worst predictors of on-the-job performance. Interview processes that use tests to determine a candidate's mental ability, aptitude for the job or personality tend to be far more effective – and less discriminatory. Employers could try experimenting with a mixture of work-sample tests, structured interviews and marking schemes. All have performed well at predicting future job performance and reducing bias at interview stage.

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[17] Reid, 2016. *Rethinking the Rooney Rule.*

Evaluate your organisation's values and biases
Employers need to reconsider their understanding of what talent looks, speaks and acts like, and consider how racial bias may affect these preconceptions. Then make adjustments to become more open to a more diverse pool of candidate.

Be open about challenging bias
In your recruitment materials, be explicit about how you challenge discrimination and bias at each stage of the selection process. This will help to give candidates more confidence in applying for roles.

Demand more from agencies
If you recruit through agencies or external recruiters ask them about what they do to ensure diverse shortlists and encourage them to actively seek out young Black male candidates.

CASE STUDY
Severn Trent

Severn Trent, a water company in Coventry, uses a targeted approach to recruit beyond Russell Group universities, where Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are less represented. It collects data at each stage of the recruitment process and monitors the success rate of Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates. It recruits for apprenticeships and work experience schemes using OFSTED data so it can identify local schools with a high proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.

At interview stage, Severn Trent has switched from using competencies (what you're able to do) to strengths (what you enjoy doing and are naturally good at). This reduces discrimination against groups who have less access to the internships and work experience opportunities that could help them develop competencies.

Severn Trent also made smaller but equally important changes, such as amending the imagery on its website to include Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. In October 2019, Severn Trent came third in the Social Mobility Index. This recognises the company's commitment to recruiting people of all backgrounds and in helping them develop their careers once they become employees.

Chapter 5
Progression and pay

"It's a common thing your parents would say: as a Black individual, Black male or Black female: you need to work twice as hard as your White counterpart. You could be absolutely amazing at your job but you still have to work harder than someone who is mediocre. Just because of the fact that they are White, they are automatically seen as better."

Black African male,
Engineering Manager,
30, Digital

Those candidates who successfully overcome discrimination and bias at recruitment stage often still face it once they start work – in their pay, career progression and disciplinary treatment. There are steps you can take to build a more inclusive culture and help young Black men flourish at work.

Our interviewees felt their skills, expertise and even appearance were not respected by employers. They were often not given the chance to shine. They were not entrusted with tasks and responsibilities that would demonstrate their skills and talent, leading to bonuses or wage raises. They were even subjected to harsher disciplinary procedures. As a result, some felt compelled to leave the sector or turn to self-employment.

5.1 Pay and progression

Many of the young Black men we interviewed had similar stories about the glass ceiling blocking their progression in the digital and construction sectors. They felt they had to work harder to build trust and credibility with their employers because of their ethnicity or race:

> **"I feel like I am an average, regular engineer. But have you ever heard this expression: if you're Black, you have to work twice as hard? I feel like you can't be an average engineer if you're Black because there are negative consequences. Whatever gaps there are in your skills is kind of amplified. I'm currently trying to get a promotion and that's been set back a couple of times. Each time, it's always for vague reasons that I feel are almost coded language. They said I don't really inspire trust in a more senior role as an engineer and I kind of felt offended. Maybe I'm being paranoid, you can kind of read it back and think: what are you really saying there? Maybe there's an undervaluing. I'm almost certainly getting paid less than my colleagues."**
> Black Arab male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

In addition, some of the interviewees felt that they were paid far less than their older White colleagues – despite doing the "same work":

> **"People don't value me as much as they value people who are mostly White and older. I'm paid thousands less for the same role. The managers said it's because there are pay grades and that I was a graduate, but I'm doing the same work as someone else. Then the same job was re-advertised for 11k more than I was paid."**
> Black African Caribbean male, Customer Service Officer, 25, Construction

Research from the Greater London Authority's Intelligence Unit places the ethnicity pay gap at 33 per cent for Black Caribbean Londoners and 43 per cent for Black African Londoners in comparison with their White British counterparts.[18] The Office for National Statistics' ethnicity pay survey shows that the pay gap between 16- to 30-year-old Black employees and their White peers is much smaller than it is for 30+ Black employees.[19] This suggests it's harder for Black Londoners to progress up the career ladder once they find work.

At the same time, Equality and Human Rights Commission research reveals that very few employers collect data on pay, progression and retention by ethnicity. For instance, only three per cent of private and voluntary sector employers analyse pay and progression data by ethnicity or disability.[20]

5.2 Discriminatory disciplinary procedures

Several interviewees shared experiences of discriminatory disciplinary processes at work. They felt they were often treated with suspicion if their colleagues made a complaint. They were not given the benefit of the doubt or the opportunity to explain. This forms a pernicious barrier to the progress, confidence and satisfaction of young Black men in employment.

> **"In my previous role at Z [company's name], there was a situation where I was off from work due to an injury. There was a lot of pressure and blame aimed at me for taking time off, so I came back to work two weeks early. Another member of staff claimed he tried to wake me up and he hit my dislocated shoulder. I reported my colleague to the manager but the story in the office was that I was asleep. The disciplinary outcomes said that I could have been fired and I felt that all of it stemmed from a dislike of me that came from a racial place. That was really tough. That's why I was put off working in engineering and it put me off work for a while."**
> Black African male, Technology Consultant, 25, Digital

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[18] Greater London Authority, 2020. *Economic Fairness – Ethnicity Pay Gap.* These figures refer to the *median* ethnicity pay gap.
[19] Office for National Statistics, 2019b. *Ethnicity pay gaps in Great Britain: 2018.*
[20] Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018. *Measuring and reporting on disability and ethnicity pay gaps.*

5.3 What employers can do

As an employer, what can you do to address some of the pay and progression challenges faced by young Black men?

Staff development programmes
You can use staff development programmes to increase the leadership aspirations, capacity and skills young Black men need to progress.

Ideally, set up your own in-work development programmes. They should blend more structured formal training with informal support and an opportunity to build networks and relationships.

Smaller employers that lack ethnically diverse representation at senior level could consider partnering with those that do. You could work with Black-led and grassroots initiatives that are supporting the development and retention of young Black professionals, helping you access new networks, up-to-date best practice and development opportunities for your young Black employees. Examples of such partners in tech and construction include:

- Black Professionals in Construction
- The Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers
- UK Black Tech

- Color In Tech
- BAME in Games
- POC in Play
- Melanin Gamers

> **"I didn't [feel like I fitted in to tech] at first, but especially in London I joined a lot of organisations that are trying to make it so you do fit in. There's meet-ups and other things that happen that bring people together – I think we're very fortunate here in London. There's some sort of validation and approval. I can share experiences and someone else would have had it before so I'm not crazy. It's also a way to counteract hiring biases. I've had people refer me to jobs through these networks, whereas I probably wouldn't have been called back to an interview if I'd done it solo."**
> Black Arab male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

Mentoring
You can run mentoring schemes to tackle a lack of diversity in senior management. Professional recruitment specialists Robert Walters[21] cited one such scheme run by an anonymous London-based company. It partnered with other organisations in a way that allowed their senior staff from 'diverse backgrounds' to connect with other mentors from similar backgrounds across the sector. This helped them access career-development advice and support.

The McGregor-Smith review[22] also highlighted the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) 'Moving into Management' courses for Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers in Scotland. With support from GMB Scotland and Scottish Union Learning, the STUC Black Workers' Committee organised a series of courses to provide the skills people need to progress at work. These courses have also encouraged peer-to-peer mentoring and support.[23]

Eliminating the pay gap
For employers looking to eliminate ethnicity pay gaps, the EHRC suggests conducting an equal-pay audit and producing an equal-pay policy.[24] This policy should include clear objectives, a workable action plan, and regular monitoring procedures.

You could review approaches to adopt from other employers in addressing the gender pay gap – such as voluntarily publishing information about their ethnic pay gap alongside their gender pay gap.

Review disciplinary procedures
It is also a good idea to review your disciplinary procedures to make sure they are not discriminating against young Black men. And include questions about such procedures in any anonymous staff surveys to surface issues and monitor improvement.

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[21] Robert Walters Whitepaper, 2017. *Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment.*
[22] McGregor-Smith Review, 2017. *Race in the workplace.*
[23] For more information, see McGregor-Smith review p.37
[24] Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019. *How do I develop an equal pay policy?*

Chapter 6
Building inclusive cultures

"They never see any other race, so a lot of their notions about what our culture is about come from TV, and so they will make silly jokes like 'I swear I saw you on Crimewatch yesterday'. Stereotypical stuff, like jokes around what they perceive to be where you come from, or where you live or "I bet it's really dangerous where you live down in London".[…] Whatever they know about our cultures, it's what they've been exposed to by the television, by the news, so it can be very hard to train those biases. Everyone in that team was mid-30s to 40s, so it feels like you're fighting a losing battle."

Black Caribbean male,
Software Engineer,
26, Digital

Building an inclusive workplace culture means tackling a wide spectrum of issues – from underrepresentation, through to stereotyping, microaggressions and overt incidences of discrimination and racism.

An inclusive workplace environment is critical to improving employee retention and progression. Organisations may view this as an add-on or a nice-to-have. However our interviews with employees show that parts of an inclusive organisational culture are essential to gaining a sense of belonging and acceptance at work.

Unfortunately, inclusive working cultures were not the norm according to the employees we interviewed. From stereotyping and microaggressions at work, through to active discrimination and racism, there are a series of barriers that employers must urgently address.

> **"The culture at work is White, middle-class, male dominated".**
> Black Caribbean male, Customer Service Officer, 25, Construction

6.1 Workplace barriers: stereotypes and discrimination

> **"When I worked in my first place, it was a global American company and there was a rule that if someone's food smells and they're from a different background, you can't comment on it. Or every Friday or on someone's birthday, you must bring samosas – everyone brings samosas, doesn't matter where you're from. Things like that were interesting but everyone was comfortable."**
> Black African male, Business Territory Manager, 26, Digital

One of the most common themes was that young Black men were not perceived as a 'culture fit'. This took several forms:

- Feeling **discomfort** and **isolation** in learning they were in a small minority:

The employees we interviewed said the lack of diversity in their companies made them feel isolated and overly-scrutinised.

> **"I've had one or two uncomfortable incidents – when I was at X company, I had to go to the North East of England and there weren't many Black or Asian people. I was literally the only Black person on the site amongst 1,400 people – that in and of itself makes you feel uncomfortable."**
> Black Caribbean male, Software Engineer, 26, Digital

This made the interviewees feel they had to somehow hide their identity and "carry a heavily edited version of myself to work" in order to be comfortable. One said he was told: "I was dressed too casual… I don't smile enough…or I look intimidating". Others talked about a general feeling of being isolated or being made to feel like "the Other".

> **"It can be pretty lonely. You are the outlier, the person who is different. You carry that social weight, so you're not anonymous."**
> Black Caribbean male, Founder of a tech company, 25, Digital

- The pressures of a **'drinking culture'**:

> **"There are things that tech companies do that are subtly exclusionary. A big, big part of tech social culture is a lot of drinking. Companies will advertise it as a perk of the job: we go to the pub every Thursday or there's plenty of beers in the fridge. I don't really drink and so I look at it and think, you're not really selling it to me."**
> Black African male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

- Being **treated unprofessionally** at work – for example, not being addressed by their names. They contrasted this with how their White counterparts were spoken to in the office:

> **"Why would you say 'yo' to me? Because I'm Black? Charlie right next to me is White and you never say 'yo' to him. It's similar from the perspective of females. It's difficult to prove something's wrong unless it's sort of outright. It's difficult because my version of 'it's gone too far' could be someone's version of 'it's just a harmless joke'."**
> Black African male, Chief Technology Officer, 30, Digital

> **"I'll be talking properly but they feel they have to go out of their way and speak slang to me for some reason."**
> Black African male, Director of his Design and Development Agency, 23, Digital

- Daily experiences of **racist 'banter', 'microaggressions'[25] and stereotyping** in the workplace:

  "Whether it's comments about my hair or an assumption from well-meaning people that I must be really good at sport just to make casual conversation, or sometimes they'll be talking about race and I'll feel like I have to bite my tongue because I don't really want to get into a political argument over lunch."
  Black African male, Technology Consultant, Graduate Scheme, 25, Digital

- A few of the employees interviewed, mainly from the construction sector, talked about **overt racism** they regularly experience at work:

  "I go on site and they ask me for drugs. They stereotype me because of the colour of my skin. I wouldn't be in construction if I were doing that stuff."
  Black African male, Trainee Site Manager, 23, Construction

These negative experiences have seen some young Black men turn to self-employment. As reasons for leaving they cited:

- hostile treatment by colleagues and managers

- constantly having to hide their identity – changing how they dressed, spoke, etc

- not being trusted.

But one young man pointed out that being self-employed did not necessarily address issues about racism in the workplace. He still felt he had to work far harder than his White counterparts to impress investors in tech. This is because "they have never come across someone like me before".

6.2 The difficulties of raising concerns

Despite the common perception that remarks or observations from their colleagues were "inappropriate and awkward", some young men didn't want to "talk politics". Others didn't feel they could report such remarks, as the thresholds for considering an incident racist were too high or too formal. They felt conflicted about tackling "microaggressions" or correcting their colleagues because they did not "want to make a big fuss" at work.

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[25] Term "microaggression" was used by Professor Derald Sue to refer to "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications."

6.3 What employers can do

As an employer, how can you help build an inclusive workplace where your staff thrive?

Become more aware of the problems
Two out of eight employers highlighted the importance "of celebrating all faiths and cultures in the workplace". Yet none mentioned the impact of stereotypes, casual racism or racist 'banter' as potential issues for Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees. Being aware of these issues is an essential first step towards changing them.

Conduct anonymous staff surveys
Regular staff surveys can help employers identify racist bullying and harassment, as well as barriers to career development – and generate ideas about the changes that need making. The University and College Union (UCU) used a survey to consult with its Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff about their experiences at work, and the measures they feel are needed to tackle racism in the workplace.[26]

The most popular responses were:
- 'effective sanctions against perpetrators of racism' (68.3 per cent)
- 'improved support for BAME staff' (61 per cent)
- 'training for senior staff' (56.3 per cent).

UCU then published a report based on these findings and made a short film to highlight Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff voices and experiences of racism at work. It also introduced a *Race Equality Charter* to change institutional culture.[27]

Team building
Conscious efforts by your leadership to encourage people to get to know each other are an effective way to improve personal relationships and reduce stereotypes:

> **"One thing this company does for me is invest a lot in team building and people being together. Every year we go to Germany where our headquarters are – four times a year, one being Christmas dinner. They make an effort for people to unite and mix in as much as they can and then from that it breaks down quite a lot of barriers and people get to know each other a bit more. I feel it's mainly because of the effort of the management team to instil that."**
> Black Caribbean male, Software Engineer, 26, Digital

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[26] McGregor-Smith Review, 2017. *Race in the Workplace.*
[27] For more information, see McGregor-Smith Review p.36.

Unconscious bias training

An increasing number of companies are looking to address workplace inequalities through unconscious bias training. In the US alone, companies now spend around $8bn a year on 'diversity training', which typically includes this topic:

> **"There's an interview in tech called 'system design interviews' where you will be asked to design some sort of system from a very abstract set of requirements. This is really to find the gaps in your general knowledge of engineering, and I think this is where the biases creep in. For instance, if I misspeak or make a mistake, or if there's a genuine gap in my knowledge as I'm answering this question, I won't be seen as someone under the pressure of the interview, like: maybe he doesn't know this specific thing, maybe if he read a book, he would find it. It's almost like they punish your mistakes more if you're Black. That's what unconscious bias training should target – cut people a little slack."**
> Black African Arab Male, Software Engineer, 27, Digital

Good-quality unconscious bias training certainly has benefits.[28] It is often identified as an accessible way of getting people to address their "implicit prejudices" or "blind spots" in recruiting or promoting people from certain groups. However, research has shown that while unconscious bias training can raise awareness, it may not change behaviour in the long term.[29] As behavioural economist Professor Iris Bohnet argues, the important thing is not just about making people aware of their unconscious prejudices or biases, it's getting them to do things differently.[30]

In other words, unconscious bias training is not a standalone tool for addressing inequality at work. Rather, it's a step towards bringing about a fundamental change in behaviour from employers, that will lead to greater diversity and equality in the workplace.

Guidance and training to change workplace behaviour

Produce line-management guidance on acceptable conduct in the workplace and training to help managers support employees' cultural and religious practices. This will vary from employer to employer and might include:

- providing alternative 'socials' that include non-drinkers
- investing in frequent team-building events that promote mixing across silos
- not commenting on other people's food smells or other culturally sensitive matters

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[28] Australian HR Institute, 2016. *Is unconscious bias training really that effective?*
[29] Jussim, 2017. *Mandatory Implicit Bias Training Is a Bad Idea.*
[30] Bohnet, 2016a. *How to Take the Bias Out of Interviews.*

One company has produced guidance for line-managers to help them better support employees' cultural and religious practices:

> **"Regarding inclusiveness, we have line-management guidance training, such as how to treat co-workers during Ramadan if they are practising, incorporating flexibility in their role, allowing them to come in late and leave the office late and being generally accommodating towards them. We actively encourage the team to celebrate different cultures and religious festivities such as Eid, Diwali and Black History Month."**
> National public sector organisation, 2,000 employees.

Establish holistic 'organisational responsibility' for diversity

A study of 450 employers found that 85 per cent said it was a priority to increase diversity in their workforce. Yet, just half had programmes in place to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce. Some 45 per cent did not even have a way to measure their staff's diversity.[31]

As the McKinsey report[32] highlights, the best way to achieve diversity is through dedicated programmes focused on specific goals. Quantitative research covering 708 organisations has suggested the best interventions are those that establish organisational responsibility, especially at managerial levels, for increasing diversity and inclusiveness. These approaches have proven more effective than diversity training and mentoring programmes, and at the same time improve the effectiveness of such programmes.[33]

Recommendations from the McGregor review[34] echoed this. They included:

1. Setting objectives for managers at every level around ensuring diversity and inclusion in their teams
2. Senior leaders taking firm action against racial harassment and bullying
3. Equality principles being integrated holistically throughout company practices.

This all involves making sure managers have the skills and language to address bias and holding line managers, board members and leaders accountable for inclusion.[35] More importantly, these systemic changes need to be part of everyday core business and decision-making. Some organisations adopt 'key performance indicators (KPIs)' to measure how effectively they're addressing racial inequalities.

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[31] Robert Walters Whitepaper, 2017. *Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment.*
[32] McKinsey & Company, 2015. *Diversity Matters.*
[33] Ibid.
[34] McGregor-Smith Review, 2017. *Race in the workplace.*
[35] Bourke et al., 2017. *Diversity and inclusion: The reality gap.*

Chapter 7
Monitoring and evaluation

"We have 50% BAME staff in London and the south. We are starting to break down statistics by different demographics, but this is an ongoing process we are focusing on this year. […] We measure the ethnicity of staff. At present we have an overall BAME percentage. We do set targets to reflect the local community and use census data to benchmark the organisations' BAME representation. […] An indicator linked to diversity and development is part of the performance review. We also have diversity scorecards, which is a benchmark for diversity within the regions."

Private tech and car rental company, 5,000 employees

To build a more diverse and inclusive workforce, you need to set targets and then carefully monitor and evaluate your progress towards them. The first step is to understand the diversity of your current workforce and applicant pools.

7.1 A lack of detailed ethnic diversity data

Collecting and evaluating diversity data is key to setting targets for diversifying recruitment, progression and representation at all levels of seniority in a company. Yet, only 36 per cent of private- and voluntary-sector employers record or collect data on employee ethnicity.[36]

Only two of the eight employers we interviewed had analysed their employee retention, promotion and other performance indicators by ethnicity. And even they had used only general binary ethnicity categories: White versus BAME. This all-too-common binary approach[37] can and often does obscure the underrepresentation of certain ethnic minorities within the workforce. None of the employers we interviewed had adopted approaches that monitored the outcomes of young Black men.

Without more finely granulated data, it is difficult for organisations to explicitly distinguish between different ethnic minorities when setting targets. When companies achieve increases in ethnic-minority employees as a whole, such rises might well be driven by increases in specific groups, say, Indian and Chinese workers. Such increases represent only limited progress in reducing employment disparities for ethnic-minority groups.[38]

EHRC[39] research also revealed that even when data is collected by ethnicity (and disability), it's often only at the recruitment stage through optional ethnic monitoring disclosure forms – so it is blind to the progress, or otherwise, of Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees in
their roles.

7.2 What employers can do

Regularly collect, evaluate and publish disaggregated ethnicity data
As a crucial prerequisite to building a more diverse workforce, you need to gather detailed data on different ethnic groups' outcomes at all stages of employment and at all levels of seniority in your company. Look beyond broad 'BAME' categorisations and consider the intersections of characteristics – such as age, race, gender – that disadvantage people in the labour market.

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[36] Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018. *Measuring and reporting on disability and ethnicity pay gaps.*
[37] Ibid.
[38] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007. *Ethnic minorities in the labour market: Dynamics and diversity.*
[39] Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018. *Measuring and reporting on disability and ethnicity pay gaps.*

This monitoring should also go beyond your company's employees and be part of negotiating contracts with potential suppliers.

This data can then be used in a range of ways: to benchmark against local populations and industry averages; to set targets for increasing the diversity of your workforce; to set performance indicators for recruitment staff and senior managers; to identify key problem areas such as which stage of the application process diversity decreases; and crucially to inform and target interventions and action plans for improvement.

Conduct regular anonymised staff surveys
See chapter 6, page 43

CASE STUDY
Herbert Smith Freehills

Law firm Herbert Smith Freehills conducts an annual audit across all ethnicities to monitor demographic and inclusion indicators. This audit is fully supported by senior management and conducted anonymously to encourage participation and disclosure. The firm publishes its results to all employees.

The data gathered informs the development of diversity and inclusion programmes, such as the company's targeted Black, Asian and minority ethnic outreach strategies and efforts to recruit diverse trainees. Publishing the data increases transparency and accountability. It also shows potential applicants that the company takes diversity and inclusion seriously.

Chapter 8
Conclusion and recommendations

8.1 Recommendations

These recommendations for employers specifically consider the unique challenges that young Black men face in entering and progressing in the digital and construction sectors. But we expect their implementation to have broader benefits for other groups who are underrepresented in your workplace.

Our research has found that there is significant room for improvement in the monitoring and evaluation of different diversity strategies. So as you implement these recommendations, it is important to commit to more robust evaluation practices.

ATTRACT MORE YOUNG BLACK MEN TO PURSUE CAREERS IN TECH AND CONSTRUCTION

Develop targeted earlier interventions with school-age young Black men: As an employer, work more closely with Black children and their wider communities, particularly parents, through existing or new community and school engagement programmes. This can help to counteract cultural and familial expectations, and challenge media portrayals of their industries from earlier on.

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Provide access to quality work experience that blends on-the-job learning with employability training, tailored to address barriers faced by young Black men: This can help to bridge the gap between education and employment, building experience and exposure. It can also help develop some of the social capital both employers and employees say is key to navigating the recruitment process successfully. It can blend experience of the working environment with mentoring and employability training to help with the next stage of recruitment. If you're running a work experience programme, it is important to offer sponsorship to young Black men from low-income families so it is possible for them to attend.

Develop targeted recruitment support and career advice at key transition points between education and employment: Employers should explore early and targeted recruitment support and career advice. They should also try to expand beyond their usual recruitment networks. In addition, they should aim to diversify the gatekeepers in the recruitment processes by promoting more Black men in their industries to senior levels. More visible senior role models would also help to remove the negative perceptions of working in these non-traditional industries. They would challenge ideas of what options are available to them too.

RECRUITMENT AND BEYOND

Widen recruitment channels through targeted graduate, apprenticeship and outreach schemes aimed at young Black men: This involves consistently reaching out to groups or student societies that might have a higher proportion of young Black male members. It means looking beyond the more obvious educational institutions to find talent, and identifying niche and targeted outlets to advertise vacancies.

Commit to more honesty and transparency about the challenges faced by your business when recruiting: This will aid retention efforts by building trust and engaging potential employees in the process. It will also avoid accidentally misleading them about the level of diversity they can expect at work.

Use recognised good practice in inclusive recruitment: This includes removing personal information from CVs, setting up diverse interview panels and carefully wording job ads. It means partnering with organisations whose work focuses on improving diversity in workplaces, and advertising for jobs on inclusive platforms. Finally, it means monitoring and evaluating the diversity of applicants at each stage of the recruitment process to identify where barriers or drop-offs might take place. If you recruit through agencies or external recruiters encourage them to actively seek out young Black male candidates if they're poorly represented in your organisation.

Test and evaluate your organisation's existing cultural values and biases, then make adjustments to become more open to a more diverse pool of candidates: Employers need to reconsider their understanding of what talent looks, speaks and acts like, and consider how racial bias may affect these preconceptions. Recruitment processes could be adjusted to address this problem by experimenting with a mixture of work-sample tests, structured interviews and marking schemes. All have performed well at predicting future job performance and reducing bias at interview stage.

Explicitly explain the recruitment process to prospective applicants, including how discrimination and bias is challenged at each stage: This can prevent candidates from deciding not to apply for a job because of fears of discrimination, and make them more confident about the roles they do apply for.

Aim to have more Black men involved in your recruitment processes by increasing their presence at senior levels: That means reviewing your internal promotion practices, introducing talent management schemes or headhunting Black men specifically for senior roles to increase diversity. That way, young Black men can see careers in these sectors are open to them too.

Require diverse shortlists ahead of moving to interview stage: Achieving a diverse shortlist removes a critical obstacle to achieving workplace diversity. You might want to implement the Rooney Rule and ensure at least one young Black man who meets all the requirements for the role is shortlisted. You may even choose to implement a rule that if a diverse shortlist is not achieved, applications will be re-opened – this has knock-on effects for encouraging organisations to improve their outreach and recruitment channels.

PROGRESSION AND PAY

Conduct an equal-pay audit and produce an equal-pay policy and action plan to tackle any ethnic pay gap: This should include clear objectives, a workable action plan, and procedures for regular monitoring. You could look at what you could adopt from successful plans for fighting the gender pay gap, such as voluntarily publishing your ethnic pay gap.

Collaborate with grassroots initiatives that support the development and retention of young Black professionals across the tech and construction industries: Partner with sector bodies (see list in chapter 5, p35) to access new networks, up-to-date best practice and development opportunities.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CULTURES

Produce line-management guidance on acceptable behaviour in the workplace and training to help managers support employees' cultural and religious practices: These will vary from employer to employer and might include: providing alternative 'socials' that include non-drinkers; investing in frequent team-building events that promote mixing across silos; not commenting on other people's food smells.

Develop a policy to tackle microaggressions in the workplace: Microaggressions are harmful and detract from efforts to create inclusive work cultures. Research shows that typical policies on reporting racist incidents do not adequately address them, often because of the high threshold of impact and evidence needed to report an incident. Employers should test and develop a policy to tackle microaggressions in the workplace. This will likely require a multipronged approach including training and reporting mechanisms. Asking specific questions about microaggressions in anonymous staff surveys can be a useful opportunity to test the impact of policies.

Move towards a holistic 'organisational responsibility' approach that's strategic and led by management teams: Establish organisational responsibility for increasing diversity and inclusiveness at managerial levels. Then collect and monitor relevant ethnicity data, set diversity targets and agree who is responsible for achieving them and by when.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Regularly collect, evaluate and publish disaggregated ethnicity data: This is key to setting aspirational targets for recruiting Black men, and their progression and eventual representation at all levels of seniority. This monitoring should go beyond employees and be included in the procurement of contracts with potential suppliers. Avoid monitoring diversity only in binary categories of White/BAME – consider the outcomes of different ethnicities and genders. This should happen through all stages of recruitment and workplace progression.

Conduct regular anonymised staff surveys: These can help you identify the extent and nature of barriers to career development, as well as the prevalence of racist bullying, harassment and microaggressions at your workplace. Surveys can also help generate ideas on how to develop inclusive cultural practices. It is important that these surveys are accompanied by tangible, timebound, well communicated and consulted-on action plans to ensure the issues raised are addressed. Otherwise you risk your employees losing faith in the point of staff surveys, resulting in lower response rates.

8.2 Conclusion

This report was commissioned to better understand the visible and invisible hurdles young Black men encounter in the digital and construction sectors. Through in-depth qualitative interviews we wanted to provide employers with a more nuanced understanding of the Black male experience in both sectors and how this impacts their outcomes. This included looking at existing good practice from within and beyond the sectors, which employers could learn from.

We talked to young Black men about issues relating to their education and career aspirations, recruitment, retention and progression. We believe this study's findings illuminate the everyday experiences of young Black men in the world of work.

Our qualitative findings suggest young Black men in the digital and construction sectors continue to face multiple barriers to employment, including:

- the expectations from communities, parents and employers that a career in digital and construction is not for them
- lack of prominent role models in the two sectors, especially and crucially among the senior staff responsible for recruitment
- barriers and bias at every stage of recruitment
- microaggressions and direct and indirect discrimination at work, ranging from thoughtless comments, racist 'banter' and ill-informed stereotypes to racial biases that affected their promotion prospects and pay
- a lack of trust in young Black men, affecting their job applications, interviews, day-to-day working life and chances of promotion.

These barriers are not inevitable or acceptable. Employers like you have the power to break them down and open up these sectors to young Black men. This is about much more than just recruitment. One of the most consistent messages from young Black men is that employers must start engaging well before recruitment starts. And diversity and inclusion strategies should not end after a job offer has been made.

There is no time to waste. This report shows young Black men are losing faith in a system that too often responds to the inequalities they face with denial and complacency. London's digital and construction companies are world renowned for their innovation and creativity. Yet too many are overlooking and excluding young Black men, and missing out on their talent and drive. Covid-19 has created huge challenges for businesses, but it also brings opportunities to rebuild anew.

The recommendations set out in this report can help you transform your recruitment practices and workplace culture, so more young Black men can forge successful careers in digital or construction. They can help you break down the barriers that hold London's young Black men back, and in doing so build a fairer and more inclusive city

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Appendix A: Methodology

The evidence underpinning this report's findings was drawn from three sources:

1. A qualitative research project, recruiting and interviewing 27 young Black men (aged 16-30) at different stages of employment in London's construction and digital sectors.
2. A literature review, gathering examples of innovative employment practices (mostly through targeted online research).
3. A qualitative research piece interviewing a small sample of employers from a range of sectors across London.

Interviews with young Black men
The main evidence for this report comes from in-depth interviews with 27 young Black men in London's construction and digital sectors. Interviewees were recruited through social media, Runnymede Trust networks and snowball sampling (where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from people they know).

The interviewees described themselves as Black, Black African or Black Caribbean. Two-thirds of the interviewees were drawn from the tech/digital sector, and the rest from various levels in the construction sector. Of these interviewees, one young man was a construction apprentice, and another was currently unemployed but keen to work in the tech sector.

It was more challenging to recruit interviewees from the construction sector and techniques such as word-of-mouth and snowball sampling were unsuccessful. Given the size of the sample we must be cautious in extrapolating conclusions to the general population of young Black men in London. However, the interviews do provide deeper insights into the experiences of young Black men at work than might have been the case in a larger-scale quantitative piece of research.

The themes explored in the interviews included:

- Career aspirations and motivations before entering employment (or while at university)
- Motivations around career decisions and desire to work in the digital and construction sectors
- Barriers experienced when applying for jobs
- Daily experiences at work (particularly with colleagues and managers)
- Actions employers could take to improve workplace environment and diversity.

We used a semi-structured questionnaire based on previous findings from studies with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and young Black men to guide the interviews. The interviewees also had the chance to raise any issues not discussed in the interview.

The analysis of the interviews was iterative in nature, with several opportunities to scrutinise and explore the data with the project team. We used a thematic analysis approach to analyse the qualitative data and categories that emerged from the interviewees themselves. This involved:

- Key themes and findings drawn out of the interviews using a 'grounded theory' approach.
- A matrix approach which explored the key themes, similarities and differences in the interviews with the different respondents

Findings were 'reality checked' and tested with both the project team and Runnymede staff during internal meetings.

Review of innovative employment practices

The second source of evidence for this report was a brief literature review of innovative employment practices from employers across various sectors. These initiatives are incorporated throughout the report.

These practices were identified through online desk research, which included existing academic, government and third sector reports.

Interviews with London-based employers

The final source of evidence was interviews with a small sample of employers about recruiting and integrating young Black men into their workforce. Interviewees were recruited through Runnymede Trust networks, employees and snowball sampling. We used a semi-structured questionnaire building on the review of innovative practices and studies around race equality and discrimination to guide the interviews.

The emphasis of this project is on young Black males, but there were very few employers who are using targeted approaches in their recruitment strategies for this group. Employers, who asked to remain anonymous in the report, were also able to raise issues which hadn't been covered in the interview.

Do note, this research is not a comprehensive review of employers' inclusion good-practices. Neither does it evaluate how effective those practices are. There were also limits to the range of opinions of staff and employers that could be covered here. This research does highlight the range and complexity of overt and subtle barriers faced by young Black men in the construction and digital sectors.

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