Skills Development Scotland

SAAB | Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board

Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Report and recommendations

March 2025

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Commission on Race in Apprenticeships was led by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in partnership with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB). The Commission aimed to understand the challenges and barriers faced by minority ethnic groups in accessing and sustaining apprenticeships. This report highlights the Commission's key findings, recommendations and actions that can be implemented by Employers, Scottish Government, Scottish Government Agencies and Education.

The Commission built on the progress that has already been made in this area, the intention of the Commission was to accelerate change to address racial imbalance in apprenticeships and provide leadership and guidance to employers, educators and policy makers, whilst recognising that there is no "silver bullet" solution and that change will be incremental.

The primary focus of the Race Commission was the role of employers in driving change, a reflection of the fundamental difference between apprenticeship pathways and other forms of post-school learning, that apprentices are – first and foremost – employees of businesses. The Commission recognised the need for concerted efforts across policy makers, public bodies, learning providers and most importantly, employers themselves.

Key findings from the Commission's work:

- **Barriers to Participation:** Barriers faced by minority ethnic individuals in accessing apprenticeships include cultural expectations, lack of awareness, and misconceptions about apprenticeships as lower-status opportunities. Occupational segregation remains a challenge, with minority ethnic individuals over-represented in lower-paying sectors and under-represented in sectors like engineering and manufacturing. In a recent survey (Young People's Career Ambitions), young people were highly likely to feel that being discriminated against in their future career was a potential barrier

- **Business Case for Diversity:** There is a clear business case for improving racial and ethnic diversity in apprenticeships, with benefits to the employer of improved productivity, innovation, and access to a broader talent pool. Diverse organisations tend to outperform less diverse ones and benefit from increased revenues and customer satisfaction

- **Good Practices and Recommendations:** Successful initiatives such as targeted recruitment, mentoring, and the use of diverse role models, have shown promise in improving minority ethnic participation in apprenticeships. Employers are encouraged to take practical steps such as workforce monitoring, positive action, and community outreach to increase diversity.

Executive Summary

Value of the apprenticeship pathway: Apprenticeships have huge potential to improve the life chances of individuals from minority ethnic communities. The benefits of an apprenticeship are well established and broad including skills development, wellbeing, sustained employment and career progression. It's vital that all underrepresented groups have equal access to these benefits.

Summary of recommendations:

The Commission has developed a set of 20 recommendations, detailed in the full report. These recommendations will help employers and stakeholders address the identified barriers and take actionable steps to improve the participation of minority ethnic people in apprenticeships.

Below is a summary of the recommendations highlighting the top three recommendations for each group.

1. The recommendations for Employers include:

- Implementing the Anti-racism Framework for Employers, developed by the Commission, to further improve the application process, workplace experience and career progression for minority ethnic apprentices

- Highlighting safe working practices, safety at work and the importance of limiting out of hours activities for apprentices that may act as a barrier to women and girls, particularly those operating in male-dominated industries

- Signing up to relevant charters/accreditations, such as, Investors in Diversity, paying the Living Wage and signing up to Fair Work practices.

2. The recommendations for Scottish Government include:

- Ensure equality considerations are embedded within any review of funding and/or allocation of apprenticeships

- Implement measures to ensure schools give equal weighting to apprenticeships as positive destinations

- Improve access to apprenticeships for minority ethnic people (including refugees and asylum seekers with Right to Remain status) by subsidising the fee attached to UK ENIC[1] that is used to recognise prior learning for qualifications from overseas.

3. The recommendations for Scottish Government Agencies responsible for delivering apprenticeships

- Ensure that minority ethnic customers receive the highest level of support or targeted offer from CIAG and that such a targeted offer takes into account the longer-term outcomes for minority ethnic people

1   The UK ENIC is the national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.

- Positively influencing the perceptions of apprenticeships within minority ethnic communities requires continued concerted promotion by Scottish Government and its agencies going forward

- Address gaps in existing and future evidence around apprenticeships.

4. The recommendations for Education include:

- Increased work with schools to ensure fuller understanding of the benefits of apprenticeships and their value amongst teachers, careers advisers and pupils

- Undertaking targeted promotion to specific groups such as women and girls and refugees by having role models and targeted promotional materials

- That schools ensure dedicated time in the curriculum for learning about apprenticeship opportunities and their position relative to SCQF levels and in supporting young people with the apprenticeship application process.

For the full list of recommendations go to page 21.

Commission on Race
in Apprenticeships Report

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Foreword

Sharon Blyfield OBE

Head of Early Careers and Apprenticeships, Coca-Cola Europacific Partnerships

Chair, SAAB Race Commission

This Commission came together to accelerate change to address racial imbalance in apprenticeships by making recommendations and offering guidance to employers, educators, and policymakers.

The benefits of Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship are well established and broad – including skills development, wellbeing, sustained employment and career progression.

It's vital that all underrepresented groups have equal access to these benefits.

Lived experience was key to the Commission's findings and its 20 recommendations.

These are structured around four pivotal themes: anti-racism, women and girls, refugees and asylum seekers, and key influencers. By focusing on these areas, we can make significant strides quickly.

The recommendations and actions will require a concerted effort if we are to promote equality and inclusion and provide minority ethnic individuals with access to career opportunities and skills development.

SDS research shows that parents and carers are the biggest influencers on young people when it comes to career decisions, and it's from schools that much of that information flows.

It is imperative that schools start to recognise and give equal weighting and time to apprenticeship opportunities as they do to university and college pathways.

While minority ethnic participation in apprenticeships has increased in recent years and we know good work is going on - more has to be done within under-represented communities to ensure the messages of the benefits are coming through.

These recommendations add up to an action plan for the Scottish government and its agencies, but also for employers and crucially, the education sector.

Government must play its part in embedding equality considerations into funding reviews and allocations and improving access by subsidising fees, really making good on the sentiments of fair work and the just transition.

The Commission will continue to play its part. As a group we are currently developing plans for an Anti-racism Framework for Employers to support the improvement of application processes, workplace experience and career progression for minority ethnic apprentices.

The findings of the Commission provide a compelling argument for businesses to prioritise diversity in their apprenticeship programmes.

All the evidence shows that companies that embrace diversity outperform their less diverse counterparts, enjoying increased productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

By adopting inclusive practices and taking proactive steps to support minority ethnic individuals, businesses can drive innovation, improve performance, and contribute to a more equitable society.

A wide range of organisations across the public, private and Third sector have been involved in adding to the evidence base and producing this final report.

I want to thank all those who have lent us their time and expertise in the last 12 months.

Apprenticeships have huge potential to improve the life chances of individuals from minority ethnic communities.

It is our collective duty to ensure this potential is fully realised.

Introduction

Introduction

Addressing the under-representation of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in apprenticeships is crucial for promoting equality and inclusion and providing those individuals with access to career opportunities and skills development. It is not only a matter of social justice and equality – it also makes economic and practical sense as it enriches the workforce, helps close skills gaps, and fosters more inclusive and creative businesses. Trends in the participation and outcomes of minority ethnic groups in education and the labour market indicated a need for visible industry leadership, which led to the creation of a Commission to address racial imbalance in apprenticeships. The Commission on Race in Apprenticeships was established in January 2024 and was led by SDS in partnership with SAAB.

The primary focus of the Commission was the role of employers in driving change, a reflection of the fundamental difference between apprenticeship pathways and other forms of post-school learning that apprentices are – first and foremost – employees of businesses. The Commission recognised the need for concerted efforts across policy makers, public bodies, learning providers and most importantly, employers themselves.

The Commission built on the progress that has already been made in this area, the intention of the Commission was to accelerate change to address racial imbalance in apprenticeships and provide leadership

and guidance to employers, educators and policy makers, whilst recognising that there is no "silver bullet" solution, and that change will be incremental.

Objectives

The objectives of the Commission on Race in Apprenticeships were to develop recommendations that would result in the following outcomes:

- Businesses would have a greater understanding of what works to improve the ethnic diversity of their workforce through apprenticeships and take measurable steps to improve ethnic diversity within their workforce

- Businesses have an increased understanding of what anti-racism is and how it can support businesses to recruit and maintain ethnic diversity into their workforce

- Businesses have increased knowledge of how to access the range of support services and resources available from the public and third sector in a way that suits their own needs and company circumstances

- Minority ethnic stakeholders feel that their lived experience and expertise have been listened to and informs the Commission's recommendations

- Develop recommendations that would help Scottish Government and its agencies identify further steps they can take to improve policy and practice to better assist employers, in line with the existing policy landscape.

Membership

The Commission was chaired by Sharon Blyfield OBE, Head of Early Careers and Apprenticeships GB, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners. Charandeep Singh BEM, Deputy Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, was the Vice Chair of the Commission.

The Commission membership comprised of members from across the private sector, education, and the Third Sector. One member of the Commission had lived experience of applying for and undertaking a graduate apprenticeship. To select Commission members, a member profile was created which detailed the skills and expertise members should have, this included:

- Knowledge and understanding of lived experience of people from minority ethnic backgrounds

- Professional knowledge as an employer of the barriers faced by minority ethnic people in employment

- Business acumen with excellent negotiation and influencing skills, with the ability to collaborate across multiple stakeholder groups on varied and complex policy issues

- Commitment to supporting equality and diversity

- Have a wide network of industry, sectoral and professional contacts.

A full list of members is provided in Appendix 2.

Evidence gathering

The Evaluation and Research team at Skills Development Scotland produced an evidence review which informed Commission members' considerations during its lifetime. The full report of this evidence review is provided in Appendix 1. Members of the Commission also input expertise based on their own experiences and invited a series of external experts to present to them at Commission meetings. An overview of these inputs is provided in Appendix 3.

In addition, research support was provided by Blake Stevenson Ltd., a social research company, whose team, directed by the Commission, conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with:

- SDS Race Focal Point Group
- Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) Apprentices Group
- People with an interest in, or lived experience of, applying for apprenticeships
- Current apprentices
- Refugees and asylum seekers from minority ethnic backgrounds

- Parents from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Careers advisors
- Learning providers
- Employers
- Third sector organisations supporting minority ethnic people
- Colleges and universities
- Developing the Young Workforce

The number and range of those consulted was determined by the lifespan of the Commission and people's capacity to take part. As a result, Commission members were keen to leave an open invitation to stakeholders and those with lived experience to engage with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

As the Commission settled in and established itself, it became clear that a number of key themes were emerging in discussions. Four short-life working groups (SLWGs) were established to enable Commission members to investigate these themes in greater depth. Members volunteered to participate in groups based on their area of expertise, and feedback was provided to the wider membership by each group at Commission meetings. To support these conversations, the membership of the Refugee SLWG was expanded to include the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and Esteem training.

The four themes that formed the focus of the SLWGs were:

- Anti-racism
- Women and girls
- Key influencers
- Refugees and asylum seekers

Each of these groups worked with the researchers to determine the consultees being reached out to. Following consultation with the requested individuals or groups, where these were available, the researchers then fed back information to each group about the findings from the consultations. This feedback informed further discussions around barriers and recommendations.

The Anti-racism group did some early work to develop the definition of race for the purposes of the Commission, which was then presented to and discussed by the wider Commission at one of its early meetings. Its later work focused on the development of the **'Investing in a Diverse Workforce: an anti-racism framework for employers'** which is referenced in the Commission's recommendations and can be found at Appendix 4 to this report.

For the purpose of the Commission, a definition of race was agreed upon. This definition includes individuals from Asian, African, Caribbean or Black and other mixed ethnic groups, excluding Other White groups. The reason for this is that the Modern Apprenticeship Statistics 2023-24 clearly highlights the underrepresentation of these groups compared to White ethnic groups.

For this purpose, the term 'minority ethnic' is used for consistency throughout this report.

Context for the Commission's work

Participation of Minority Ethnic Individuals in Apprenticeships and Employment

Growth in Scotland's population is slowing and is heavily dependent on migration. The population is ageing, and the working age population has declined, projected to decline further. Slowing population growth combined with an ageing population have significant implications for the supply of labour. Projections show that Scotland needs 1.1 million people to fill job opportunities driven by economic growth and the need to replace workers leaving the labour market – this is around 40% of the total current workforce. The work of the Race Commission is vital in that context.

Across a range of reports and studies, the evidence consistently highlights the persistent under-representation of minority ethnic individuals in apprenticeships. Apprenticeships have huge potential to improve the life chances of individuals from minority ethnic communities. The benefits of an apprenticeship are well established and broad including skills development, wellbeing, sustained employment and career progression. It's vital that all underrepresented groups have equal access to these benefits, including minority ethnic individuals.

SDS data on Modern Apprenticeships shows that in 2023/24, the proportion of starts self-identifying as Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or black; and Other ethnic group was 4.5%, the highest ever reported, and 1.2 percentage points (pp) higher than last year. The number of starts self-identifying as a minority ethnic increased from 834 to 1,120 (+34.3%) compared to last year. The proportion of minority ethnic starts is now 2.1 pp higher than it was pre-pandemic (2.4%). However, Census data shows that the percentage of people in Scotland with a minority ethnic background (excluding Other White groups) increased from 4% in 2011 to 7.1%[2] in 2022 so minority ethnic people remain underrepresented in apprenticeships. SDS data also shows that minority ethnic apprentices start their apprenticeships later than their White counterparts, with 55.3% of them aged 25+ compared to 39.7% of White people commencing an apprenticeship.

SDS further reports that the under-representation of minority ethnic people is particularly evident in high-paying sectors such as engineering and manufacturing, where minority ethnic participation remains low, while their presence is higher in lower-paying sectors like retail and hospitality. Additionally, minority ethnic individuals face significant challenges in the labour market, including discrimination, lower employment rates, and a notable ethnicity pay gap, despite the clear business case for diversity and inclusion (SDS Evidence Review, 2024).

2   It is worth noting that there is a greater proportion of Minority Ethnic people in younger age groups and variances across local authority areas. For more information, please see Scotland's Census 2022 **https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/**

The Young People's Career Ambitions (YPCA) 2022/23 (SDS, 2023a)[3] report further underscores that minority ethnic young people in Scotland often prioritise academic routes, with a strong emphasis on university education, driven by their educational achievements. Their career decisions are heavily influenced by these outcomes, in contrast to their White peers, who are more influenced by parental guidance and personal interests. The Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework states that despite generally high attainment at school and high rates of entry into further and higher education, statistically minority ethnic people are not receiving the labour market advantages which should be expected considering their positive educational outcomes. According to the latest Annual Participation Measure from 2023, 94.3% of 16-19 year olds were participating in education, employment or training. The participation rate among White 16–19-year-olds in Scotland was 94%, compared to 96.8% for minority ethnic groups. This difference can be attributed to minority ethnic individuals' higher participation rate in education, at 88% compared to 70% for their White counterparts.

The Engaging Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) in Apprenticeships consultation report (CEMVO, 2020)[4] provides further insights into the barriers and perceptions that deter minority ethnic individuals from participating in apprenticeships. The report reveals a significant lack of awareness and understanding of apprenticeships within minority ethnic communities, compounded by the stigma of apprenticeships being perceived as less prestigious than university education. These challenges are further exacerbated by the influential role of parents, who often guide their children away from apprenticeships in favour of academic pathways. The consultation also highlighted the need for targeted engagement strategies to increase awareness and change perceptions within these communities.

The achievement rate for minority ethnic apprentices stands at 70.4%, lower than the 72.8% rate for their White counterparts and the overall achievement rate of 72.7%. The achievement gap has widened by 2.1 percentage points compared to the previous year. (SDS, 2023b)

Growth in Scotland's population is slowing and is heavily dependent on migration. The population is ageing, and the working age population has declined, projected to decline further. Slowing population growth combined with an ageing population have significant implications for the supply of labour. Projections show that Scotland needs 1.1 million people to fill job opportunities driven by economic growth and the need to replace workers leaving the labour market – this is around 40% of the total current workforce. The work of the Race Commission is vital in that context.

Key learning from the Commission's Research

Promotion, engagement and uptake
Across the individuals and groups consulted during the lifespan of the Commission and across the Commission's short-life working groups, a lack of awareness of the range of apprenticeship opportunities, how to access these, the timing of promotion and misconceptions about

3   SDS (2023) Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Briefing Paper
4   CEMVO, Engaging Black and Minority Ethnic in Apprenticeships, (2020).

the value of apprenticeships emerged as key barriers. These findings resonated with key findings from the evidence review conducted by SDS as part of the Commission's work which showed:

- **Challenges in Awareness and Engagement:** Minority ethnic young people exhibit a lower awareness and interest in apprenticeships compared to their White counterparts. The evidence suggests that cultural norms, family expectations, and a preference for academic routes over vocational ones play significant roles in this under-engagement. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Engagement Trends:** Although there has been a positive trend in the number of minority ethnic individuals starting apprenticeships, their overall representation remains lower than their population share, particularly among younger age groups. (SDS, 2023b)

- **Role Models and Visibility:** Promoting apprenticeships through relatable role models and case studies can effectively raise awareness and esteem of apprenticeships among minority ethnic communities. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Career Influences/Parental influence:** Minority ethnic young people are more influenced by their school achievements than other factors when making career decisions. This contrasts with the broader population, where parental influence is stronger. Minority ethnic young people are also more likely to be influenced by careers advisers (SDS, 2023a). The CEMVO report however,

highlights the significant influence that parents have on their children's career choices. Many minority ethnic parents viewed apprenticeships as less prestigious than university education, which impacts their support for apprenticeships as a viable option for their children. (CEMVO, 2020) In addition, the negative experiences of parents can affect the advice provided to minority ethnic young people

- **Employer Engagement:** Employers play a crucial role in demonstrating the career opportunities available through apprenticeships. By actively promoting apprenticeships as a viable alternative to higher education, especially in high-paying sectors, employers can increase minority ethnic participation. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Existing and perceived barriers:** Discrimination is a significant barrier for minority ethnic young people. They are highly likely to report that their race may hinder their future career opportunities. (SDS, 2023a) Minority ethnic women and disabled women, as well as minority ethnic people suffering from mental health problems face additional discrimination. Moreover, minority ethnic Muslim women wearing a hijab are at greater risk of experiencing Islamophobia and racism. (Economic and Social Research Council, 2023)[5]

- **Stigma and Misconceptions:** The consultation underscored the existence of stigma surrounding apprenticeships, particularly from

5   Economic and Socia Research Council, Scotland's Islamophobia (2023)

the perspective of minority ethnic parents who often see them as a "below par" alternative to university. (CEMVO, 2020)

● **Lack of Awareness and Understanding:** Both minority ethnic young people and parents showed limited understanding of what apprenticeships entail, with many associating them solely with trade-based careers. There was a notable lack of awareness regarding the different types of apprenticeships available (Foundation, Modern, and Graduate) and their potential benefits. (CEMVO,2020)

The Commission recognises the extensive work that has taken place around promotion, including the production of high-quality promotional materials which feature minority ethnic apprentices; the Apprenticeships.scot website which provides a platform for advertising apprenticeship opportunities; face-to-face promotion in schools; and promotion through third-party organisations. Consultation undertaken during the lifespan of the Commission did, however, highlight that minority ethnic parents and young people, as well as employers, continue to cite a lack of understanding and awareness. While many might be aware of the concept of apprenticeships, their knowledge of what these involve, and the range of opportunities available through the apprenticeship programmes in Scotland remains too limited and is often based on outdated information. Commission members noted the continuing need to work to breakdown the misconceptions around apprenticeships. Parents often associate these as a route for pupils who have under-performed

at school and continue to show a preference for college or university progression routes. There are some signs that these perceptions are beginning to change but more needs to be done. Importantly, minority ethnic people should be involved prior to campaigns, and be involved in the audit of impact and legacy outcomes.

If we want to affect change and the demographic uptake of apprenticeships, there is a clear and ongoing need to promote apprenticeship pathways to BME communities. This promotion needs to focus on: Awareness raising, Breaking down misperceptions, Signposting support, Role modelling, Teacher awareness, Employer recruitment practice. Demand for apprenticeships amongst young people is growing. A recent UCAS report stated that, 60% of applicants don't pursue an apprenticeship because they can't find one in their region. One in three (35%) students previously interested in studying an apprenticeship said they were prevented from doing so due to a lack of roles in their desired career (UCAS).

> "**Our new report highlights two main areas of opportunity – increasing the supply of apprenticeships and helping students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, access this pathway.**"
> (UCAS Chief Executive, Clare Marchant. UCAS, July 2023)

Furthermore, the evidence gathered shows that young people could benefit from earlier engagement with careers guidance. It is crucial that engagement starts early, and that opportunities to enable minority ethnic people to hear from other minority ethnic people (particularly those in their own communities) who are already undertaking apprenticeships is an important part of this engagement.

Involving parents as early as possible in this engagement is also crucial, since parents remain key influencers in relation to progression routes. Engagement with parents currently is often minimal, undertaken en masse at school events, and not tailored to the specific circumstances of minority ethnic young people. There is a clearly articulated need in future to ensure that parents are being engaged regularly and in community settings.

Our primary research also highlighted the importance of tapping into opportunities to use social media to engage more extensively with young people and parents/community; as well as the need to identify and work with community influencers/role models.

Policy and Funding

While some of the solutions indicated through the primary research and the evidence review can be implemented in the short term by the responsible bodies, some of these require more substantive policy changes or changes to funding regimes to be made.

Commission members do not underestimate the complexity of policy or funding changes but recognise the feedback from those consulted during the lifespan of the Commission, and the findings from the evidence review which show that more radical change is needed to make a substantive difference to the take-up of apprenticeships by minority ethnic people. Consultees emphasised the importance of introducing measures which both break down barriers to minority ethnic people applying for apprenticeships, and measures which support and incentivise employers to recruit minority ethnic apprentices.

The evidence considered underscored the need for this to happen and in particular highlighted the need for:

● **Positive Action and Inclusivity:** The evidence suggests that positive action is underutilised, particularly within the public sector. Employers should have clear policies and practices that promote inclusivity to the recruitment, progression and retention of minority ethnic employees. (SDS Evidence Review 2024)

● **Support for Employers:** The review stresses the need for ongoing support for employers in implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. This includes providing practical tools and resources to help employers adopt more inclusive recruitment practices, understand the business benefits of diversity, and develop a holistic approach to equality. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Cultural Change:** The need for a cultural shift within organisations is critical. Many employers are hesitant to engage in conversations about race and ethnicity. Supporting employers to overcome this discomfort and encouraging them to take proactive steps is essential for long-term change. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Addressing Discrimination:** Policies must specifically address the barriers related to racial discrimination that minority ethnic young people experience and/or perceive. This could include initiatives to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by minority ethnic individuals in the workforce, as well as more robust anti-discrimination measures in educational and employment settings. (SDS, 2023a)

- **Confidence in Career Management:** While minority ethnic young people generally report high levels of confidence in their career management skills, there remains a notable concern about facing discrimination in the workplace. (SDS, 2023a)

Programmes and Support

Tailored programmes and support can play an important role in supporting change, and the evidence review confirmed that they could make an important contribution to improving uptake of apprenticeships by minority ethnic people. In particular, the evidence examined indicated the importance of:

- **Dedicated Support for Minority Ethnic Apprentices:** The evidence suggests that dedicated mentoring and support programmes are vital for minority ethnic apprentices. Employers who have successfully implemented such programmes report positive outcomes in terms of retention and completion rates. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Targeted Recruitment and Retention:** Practical steps recommended for employers include using data to inform recruitment strategies, employing positive action measures, and ensuring that recruitment and retention practices are inclusive. Support systems such as mentoring and networking are also crucial in helping minority ethnic apprentices succeed. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Case Studies and Good Practice:** Sharing examples of good practice among employers is recommended to inspire and guide others in adopting effective strategies for increasing ethnic diversity in apprenticeships. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024).

- **Tailored Career Guidance:** Minority ethnic young people benefit from strong, tailored career guidance, particularly from school-based career advisers. Ensuring that these advisers are equipped to understand and address the unique challenges faced by minority ethnic pupils is critical for supporting their successful transition into further education or the workforce. (SDS, 2023a)

- **Enhanced Support and Information:** To improve engagement, the report recommends more intensive engagement with minority ethnic parents through community events and school-based career fairs. Additionally, there is a need for more accessible information and promotion of apprenticeships.Scot, in a way that can guide users in understanding whether an apprenticeship aligns with their career goals. (CEMVO, 2020)

- **Role of Schools and Career Advisers:** Schools and career advisers play a critical role in shaping career choices. The report suggests that they need better training and resources to provide comprehensive guidance on apprenticeship opportunities, particularly to minority ethnic students (CEMVO,2020). This is of particular importance as minority ethnic young people are more likely to strive for traditional professional routes and may not consider alternative routes.

Commission members considered this evidence carefully and built on this knowledge through their own consultation with a range of stakeholders. Stakeholders were also of the view that improved and new programmes and support could contribute to making a difference. Many supported the introduction by employers of mentoring support for minority ethnic apprentices; interventions that could strengthen partnerships between schools and employers; and a need for specific interventions to support asylum seekers and refugees.

The Business Case

The business case for racial and ethnic diversity in the workforce is clear: diverse companies consistently outperform less diverse ones in productivity, profitability, and innovation. Studies show that organisations that have taken steps to achieve equity show a 58% increase in revenue compared to those that do not and generally are more likely to achieve above-average financial returns (Henley Business School, 2021). Additionally, fully representing minority ethnic individuals in the UK labour market could generate an extra £24 billion annually, according to the McGregor-Smith Review (2017). Diverse teams bring a variety of perspectives and problem-solving approaches, driving creativity and better decision-making. Companies that actively promote racial equity often experience higher overall company value, showcasing the direct financial benefits of diversity and inclusion efforts.

Beyond financial gains, diverse workplaces foster greater employee retention and access to new markets. When employees feel accepted and respected, they tend to stay longer, reducing recruitment costs (IfATE, 2023). Additionally, businesses that reflect the diversity of their communities can better attract and serve a broader customer base, tapping into previously under-represented markets. This is particularly important as minority ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and women continue to gain purchasing power. Further, inclusive practices in apprenticeships help businesses build a formal group of talent for

employers to hire from while improving workforce representation. Embracing diversity not only enhances financial performance but also contributes to a more innovative workplace.

Measuring Progress and Evidence

Commission members recognise the importance of monitoring progress towards achieving improved representation of minority ethnic people in apprenticeships through the recommendations outlined in this report. Commission members identified a need to ensure that the evidence to benchmark and monitor improvements is available to key stakeholders, and that there are mechanisms to facilitate effective monitoring. The evidence gathered during the Commission's lifespan highlighted that there remain gaps in both of these areas:

- **Data Gaps:** The review highlights significant evidence gaps, particularly in the availability of more detailed research and data on the experiences of specific ethnic groups and the intersectionality between race and other characteristics such as poverty and care experience and how these impact on apprenticeship experiences. There is a need for more granular data to better understand and address the diverse needs of different ethnic groups. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024)

- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Employers and policymakers should improve their understanding of workforce diversity through better data collection and monitoring. This includes disaggregating data by specific ethnic groups and tracking the progression and outcomes of minority ethnic apprentices. (SDS Evidence Review, 2024). The Scottish Government's 'A Fairer Scotland for All: An Anti-Racist Employment Strategy' offers employers clearer guidance on how to collect and monitor employee data.

Attributing responsibilities for implementation of the proposed recommendations was considered to be crucial to ensuring accountability.

Together, these findings highlight the complex and multi-faceted challenges that minority ethnic groups face in accessing and succeeding in apprenticeships in Scotland, and the urgent need for more targeted strategies to address the continuing need.

Key facts emerging from the primary research and evidence review which members believe underpin the work of the Commission on Race in Apprenticeships:

- People from a minority ethnic background continue to be under-represented in ap prenticeships. Despite barriers being the same for many years, too little change has occurred. More drastic action is therefore required to accelerate progress and under-representation

- Apprenticeships have huge potential to improve the life chances of individuals from minority ethnic communities. The benefits of an apprenticeship are well established and broad including skills development, wellbeing, sustained employment and career progression. It's vital that all underrepresented groups have equal access to these benefits, including minority ethnic individuals

- Lack of visibility of successful apprentices from BME communities or involving BME employers

- There remains a lack of awareness of the range of apprenticeship opportunities, and their value compared to other academic qualifications, particularly amongst parents and young people. Career services and schools have an important role to play in addressing these gaps

- Minority ethnic people continue to experience both unconscious bias and discrimination in the workplace and employers have a key role to play in ensuring that recruitment and employment practices are inclusive and non-discriminatory

- Low pay is a key barrier preventing some minority ethnic people entering apprenticeships and there needs to be more focus on Fair Work practices amongst employers

- For refugees and asylum seekers, to access apprenticeships, there is a requirement to have a Right to Remain status in the UK sufficient for the full duration of the apprenticeship[6]. For those who have that status, other barriers exist including, the recognition of prior learning and qualifications and language barriers.

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6 The Modern Apprenticeship Programme Specification (2024-2025) gives Apprenticeship Learning Providers additional guidance on Modern Apprenticeship eligibility rules.

Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Recommendations

Recommendations

Introduction

These recommendations represent many months of investigation and deliberation by Commission members. We recognise that not everything can be achieved at once and these recommendations represent a distillation of a long list of potential changes that were discussed. Importantly, these recommendations build on the recommendations made by the Gender Commission in 2022, the evidence provided through the SDS evidence review, and information collected through consultations taking place throughout the Commission's lifespan.

The recommendations outlined in the next section are considered by Commission members to be the most pressing amongst the many suggestions we heard for change, and those that can make the biggest difference. They will take concerted effort, partnership working, and finance to be achieved but Commission members believe that they will make a material difference to addressing the under-representation of minority ethnic people in apprenticeships in Scotland. They are a combination of recommendations which build on work already ongoing, include new measures to support employers and public bodies to effect change and measures which involve taking positive action to ensure change.

The Commission believes that responsibility for the implementation of these recommendations lies with four key groups of stakeholders – Scottish Government, Scottish Government Agencies responsible for the delivery of apprenticeships, employers and schools. The recommendations are therefore clustered by each of these stakeholder groups and include short, medium and longer-term recommendations. The final recommendations relate to monitoring progress to ensure that these recommendations are actioned.

Employers

Evidence examined by both this Commission and the Gender Commission before it demonstrates the value to the economy and employers of improving the diversity of the workforce. The business case for racial and ethnic diversity in the workforce is clear: diverse companies consistently outperform less diverse ones in productivity, profitability, and innovation. Therefore, for businesses to benefit from a more diverse workforce through apprenticeships, two things need to happen. The first – and most important – is that businesses need to create more opportunities to employ more apprentices from minority ethnic communities and the second, more people from minority ethnic communities need to be aware of the intrinsic benefits and value of an apprenticeship.

Collaboration will be key to boosting diverse workforces. This can be achieved with industry bodies such as Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors and sector-led business groups working with employers to support them to take the following actions:

1. Implementing the Anti-racism Framework for Employers, developed by the Commission, to further improve the application process, workplace experience and career progression for minority ethnic apprentices

2. Highlighting safe working practices, safety at work and the importance of limiting out of hours activities for apprentices that may act as a barrier to women and girls, particularly those operating in male-dominated industries

3. Signing up to relevant charters/accreditations, such as Investors in Diversity

4. Paying the Living Wage and signing up to Fair Work practices

5. Creating more mentoring and networking opportunities for minority ethnic apprentices, including tailored support mechanisms for minority ethnic women, particularly in the early stages of undertaking their apprenticeship to improve uptake and retention

6. Creating "reverse mentoring" for employers, especially those in leadership positions, to support them to gain a better understanding of the benefits of recruiting more diversely

7. Sharing learning from successful practice from BME employers and creating cross-industry mentoring with other employers

8. Creating an evolving business case showing the value of equality and diversity as part of the support/resource package to employers.

Scottish Government

Commission members recommend that Scottish Government:

9. Uses the findings and insights from the Race Commission to ensure equality considerations are embedded within any review of funding and/or allocation of apprenticeships. Considering the following changes as part of any future review of funding for apprenticeships:

   a. Provide additional support for minority ethnic people by introducing enhanced funding contributions for providers and employers building on the Ethnic Intersectionality Initiative[7]

10. Implements measures to ensure schools give equal weighting to apprenticeships as positive destinations

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7   Modern Apprenticeship training providers identified that minority ethnic candidates with additional barriers such as those described above were harder to recruit and sometimes required significant specialised or additional support. Accordingly, SDS introduced the **Ethnic Intersectionality Incentive**, a grant of £1000 to offset the costs of servicing additional needs such as targeted marketing and specialised/additional support to recruit certain groups into the MA programme.

11. Improve access to apprenticeships for minority ethnic people (including refugees and asylum seekers with Right to Remain status) by subsidising the fee attached to UK ENIC[8] that is used to recognise prior learning for qualifications from overseas which would remove the barrier for achieving a Statement of Comparability to the Scottish qualifications and framework levels.

Scottish Government Agencies

As the bodies that administer all apprenticeship programmes on behalf of the Scottish Government, SDS and SFC have a key role to play in supporting measures to improve the uptake of apprenticeships by minority ethnic people. In taking forward its work, Commission members recommend that these agencies:

Commission members recommended that the agencies responsible for commissioning, funding and delivering apprenticeships and the delivery of national careers services on behalf of the Scottish Government are enabled to:

12. Ensure that minority ethnic customers receive the highest level of support or targeted offer from CIAG and that such a targeted offer takes into account the longer-term outcomes for minority ethnic people

13. Ensure that flexibility is embedded in training providers' selection processes and that the principles of widening access are applied to apprenticeship entry requirements

14. Explore opportunities, building on the recent Scottish Government research exploring the potential for a right to work pilot for asylum seekers, to introduce a pre-apprenticeship programme focused on meta skills and Scottish culture for refugees and asylum seekers. The programme could involve teaching core skills in a college setting followed by practical application in the workplace to help refugees build up their confidence and competence to successfully navigate their first steps into employment.

15. undertake enhanced and more targeted promotion of apprenticeship opportunities including:

   a. Creating an ambassador programme that is focused on minority ethnic role models/ambassadors for equality, diversity and inclusion

   b. Increasing awareness raising targeted at schools with larger populations of minority ethnic young people

   c. Undertaking more direct engagement with Minority Ethnic employers to make them aware of apprenticeships as an opportunity

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8   The UK ENIC is the national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.

d. Clearer articulation and wider promotion of career progression opportunities post-apprenticeship

e. More extensive sharing of examples of inclusive practice across industry

f. Increased engagement with popular minority ethnic social media influencers as a key route to reaching minority ethnic young people

g. Increased engagement with parents of minority ethnic people through places of worship, local community organisations, and social media; and identify other points of influence within communities.

16. Address gaps in existing and future evidence around apprenticeships including:

   a) Collecting and analysing data to show the breakdown of race intersectionality with other protected characteristics and how these may impact on apprenticeship experiences, recruitment and progression

   b) Measuring post-apprenticeship outcomes for minority ethnic apprentices

   c) Undertaking in-depth qualitative research detailing lived experiences of minority ethnic individuals undertaking apprenticeships.[9]

The Commission wishes to ensure that the recommendations outlined in this report are taken forward and members recognise that accountability for implementation and monitoring progress towards achieving these is vital. Commission members recommend therefore that Scottish Government works with its agencies and employers to:

17. Develop a set of indicators against which to measure progress in the short, medium and longer term with annual reporting of progress to Scottish Ministers. Progress measurement should include consideration of how to measure the longer-term outcomes for the individual.

Education

Schools, and teachers and career advisers in particular, have a key role in ensuring that young people have the right information to make choices about their future that are best suited to them. We know from our research that a lack of understanding options, and misconceptions about the value of apprenticeships compared to other progression routes, are acting as barriers. In order for this to be addressed, the Commission recommends:

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9 SDS have been gathering and developing this information via the Apprentice Voice Survey 2024. For more information, see <u>Apprentice Voice - Real time apprentice insights.</u>

18. Increased work with schools to ensure fuller understanding of the benefits of apprenticeships and their value amongst teachers, career advisers and pupils

19. Undertaking more targeted promotion to specific groups such as women and girls and refugees by having role models and targeted promotional materials

20. That schools ensure dedicated time in the curriculum for learning about apprenticeship opportunities and their position relative to SCQF levels and in supporting young people with the apprenticeship application process.

Concluding statement

The Commission on Race in Apprenticeships gave Commission members the opportunity to focus on the root causes of under-representation of minority ethnic people in apprenticeships and explore potential solutions which would support employers to break down barriers.

Commission members and consultees alike emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Commission did not simply repeat work that had gone before, and that they had the potential to effect real change. There was recognition of the extensive effort that has already gone into trying to break down barriers to minority ethnic people taking up apprenticeships, and a strong desire to build on this work and go further.

The economic and social changes facing society mean that now, more than ever, we need to ensure equality and diversity in apprenticeships and employment is enhanced and embedded in order to truly meet the national objectives of making Scotland a vibrant and thriving economy.

The Chair of the Commission is grateful to all members for their valuable input to the Commission and their willingness to commit to and give up their time to this complex area of work. The Commission on Race in Apprenticeships would like to thank all of those stakeholders and people with lived experience who gave so generously of their time, and for their thoughtful and inciteful contributions. We hope that they recognise their voice in this report.

The Commission is optimistic and hopeful that the recommendations proposed in this report make a difference, and that the barriers to minority ethnic people taking up apprenticeships continue to be broken down. Achieving this will require short, medium and long-term changes to be made. We encourage employers, careers advisers, schools, parents, public bodies and the Scottish Government to work together to ensure that these recommendations are implemented and we encourage bold steps to be taken.

Appendices

Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Appendix 1 – Evidence Review

Contents

Key Findings

- Minority ethnic individuals **do not receive the labour market advantages which should be expected** when considering their positive educational outcomes. Individuals with multiple equality characteristics face greater disadvantage and discrimination in apprenticeships and at work

- Despite incremental progress **the participation of minority ethnic individuals in apprenticeships appears slow to change.** Minority ethnic participation in Scottish apprenticeships mirrors occupational segregation, (where workers are unequally distributed based on demographic characteristics, such as race or ethnicity) in the paid labour market

- There is a **strong business case for equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace** with clear benefits for employers and workers in relation to productivity, profitability, innovation and skills

- **Barriers to undertaking apprenticeships among minority ethnic young people** include choosing more academic routes; lacking the necessary networks to get placements; lower awareness and interest in pursuing apprenticeship routes; and cultural barriers

- **Challenges for employers** include apprenticeship applications not translating to starts at the same rate of White counterparts; employer recruitment practices that rely on word of mouth, lack of career progression, mentors and role models for minority ethnic apprentices; lack of awareness or knowledge of positive action; lack of knowledge of workforce ethnic diversity; challenges in translating policy on equality and diversity into action; resistance to change; and lack of clarity on the business benefits of diversity

- **Ways to improve racial diversity in apprenticeships** include emphasising the career opportunities offered by apprenticeships; promoting apprenticeships as a genuine alternative to higher education; using role models to raise the awareness and esteem of apprenticeships; and working with careers advisers and trusted adults who play a key role supporting minority ethnic young people's career ambitions

- **Evidence gaps** exist, particularly around detailed data on different ethnic groups and individual minority ethnic experiences of getting into and progressing within apprenticeships

- **Implications for the Race Commission to consider** include recognising that employers can not address the issue alone; supporting employers to understand benefits of workforce diversity and how to act on this; better understanding of workforce diversity and how to monitor this; sharing good practice around what works; and recognising and supporting the need for cultural change.

Introduction

This document provides a review of available evidence on the apprenticeship experiences of minority ethnic individuals and groups in Scotland and the rest of the UK (rUK), using a rapid evidence assessment approach.

Rationale for this review

The key rationale for this review was to support the work of the Commission on Race in Apprenticeships led by Skills Development Scotland. This Commission was influenced by the work of the SAAB Gender Commission. The Gender Commission took an employer-led approach to improving gender diversity in apprenticeships. The Commission on Race will take learning from this to harness employer leadership as an effective means of engaging with employers around apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are a key part of the Scottish Government's strategy to develop Scotland's workforce. In Scotland, apprenticeships are delivered by Skills Development Scotland, the national skills body. There are currently three types of Scottish apprenticeships:

- **Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs)** – for school pupils between S3 to S6. They choose this qualification as part of their subject choices and work with employers

- **Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)** – typically for people from statutory school leaving age up to 24, although there is no upper age limit. A Modern Apprentice is employed and works towards a qualification with a college or learning provider

- **Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs)** – for anyone who is statutory school leaving age or above. A Graduate Apprentice is employed and works full-time while gaining up to a Masters level degree.

Despite incremental progress in the percentage of apprentices from a minority ethnic background in some apprenticeship offers, **figures still fall short of the Scottish government target** of 5.1% of apprenticeship starts which was set out in Developing the Young Workforce's Scotland Youth Employment Strategy.[10]

This review draws from a wide range of evidence to contextualise and begin to understand the **under-representation of minority ethnic individuals in Scottish apprenticeships**, and what can be done to improve this.

10 SDS (2021) Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan: Final Report 2015-2021

Aims of this Rapid Evidence Assessment

The objective of this Rapid Evidence Assessment is to understand:

- The data and research evidence landscape focused on minority ethnic individuals' apprenticeship experiences in Scotland.

The overall aims are to:

- Produce an evidence review to support the evidence base for the Race Commission

- Provide evidence to frame the external consultant's primary research with key stakeholders.

Our approach

This review used a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) approach. This is a systematic approach to identifying and critically appraising studies. To ensure the approach is rapid, restrictions are placed on the breadth, depth, and comprehensiveness of the search. Criteria limitations included English-language published sources after 2015 focusing on the Scottish and rest of UK (rUK) context. This approach was systematic and involved:

- Identifying sources by reviewing abstracts of all relevant literature and focusing on those which were within the restricted criteria

- Reviewing the full text of the most relevant publications, which included extracting the author, year, method, research design and main findings

- Summarising the main findings.

In addition to sources identified through the REA, this review also incorporates findings from sources used in other SDS publications. Some of these do not meet all the current search criteria for publication dates but have all previously undergone a REA process.

Terminology

SDS recognises that using umbrella terms such as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) or Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) can cause issues. The terms BME or BAME don't always include White minority ethnic groups. SDS further recognises that there are distinct and unique identities and different barriers facing different minority ethnic communities. These differences and challenges can be obscured when research aggregates all minority ethnic groups together under the terms BME or BAME. In this context, and more broadly, we remain committed to understanding and addressing discrimination and acknowledge that people may find the terms do not accurately describe their identity and we support everyone's right to define themselves.

A range of terms relating to ethnicity are used in the administrative data, surveys and research reports used for this review and we use the same terms as the source document where this is the case.

In this review the term 'minority ethnic' is used for consistency in line with the Scottish Government[11], except when referring to the language used in specific source data.

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[11] Scottish Government (2021) Race equality action plan: Final report

Participation of minority ethnic people in education and work

This section provides contextual data on the levels of participation in education and labour market, including apprenticeships.
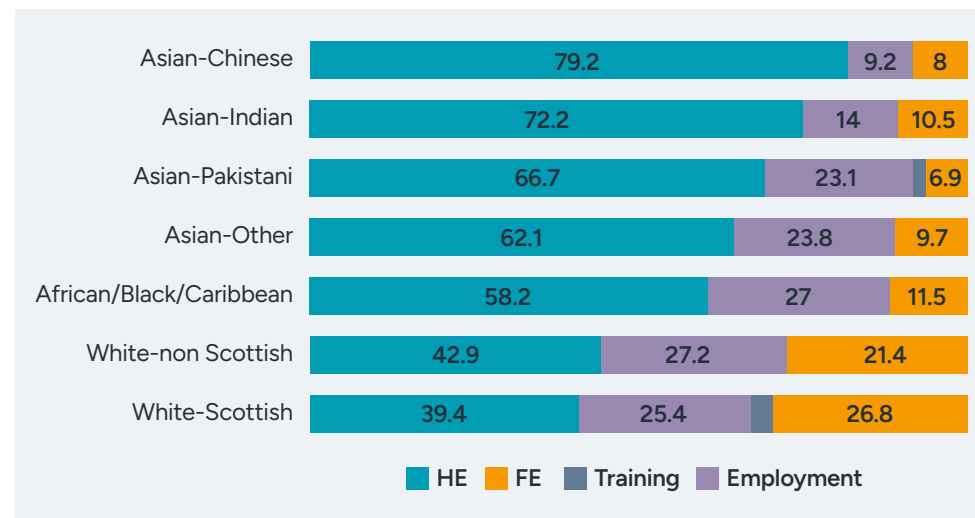
Post-school participation of minority ethnic young people

The Annual Participation Measure (APM) has been adopted by the Scottish Government as a measure of young people's (16 – 19) participation in education, training, or employment. According to the latest APM from 2023, 94.3% of 16-19 year olds were participating in education, employment or training.[12] The participation rate among White 16-19 year olds in Scotland was 94%, compared to 96.8% for minority ethnic groups. This difference can be attributed to minority ethnic individuals' higher participation rate in education, at 88% compared to 70% for their White counterparts.

Figures from England show similarly that at age 16, 94% of all pupils go directly into some form of employment, education, or training.[13] However, when outcome data is explored by specific ethnicities, participation rates differ greatly between ethnic groups. For example, the post-16 participation rate was only 68% for Gypsy Roma people, and 74% for Irish Travellers, emphasising the value of disaggregating data by specific ethnic groups where possible.[14]

Initial school leaver destinations data from Scotland illustrates the differences across ethnic groups entering various positive destinations. Figure 2.1 shows the relative percentages of 2021/22 school leavers by ethnic background entering education, training or employment. Comparing ethnic groups shows that Asian-Chinese school leavers' entry rates to higher education (79.2%) were twice as high as White Scottish school leavers (39.4%). Three times as many African/Black/Caribbean school leavers (27%) reported college as their initial destination compared to Asian-Chinese school leavers (9.2%). These figures show the importance of reporting data by specific ethnic group where possible to move away from a homogenised approach to understanding the destinations of young people from a minority ethnic background.[15]

Ethnic group	HE	FE	Training	Employment
Asian-Chinese	79.2	8		9.2
Asian-Indian	72.2	10.5		14
Asian-Pakistani	66.7	6.9		23.1
Asian-Other	62.1	9.7		23.8
African/Black/Caribbean	58.2	11.5		27
White-non Scottish	42.9	21.4		27.2
White-Scottish	39.4	26.8		25.4

Source: Scottish Government (2023) Supplementary tables – summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations. Note: where percentages are missing this is due to values being too low to disclose.

12 SSDS (2023) Annual Participation Measure 2023 Report
13 DfE (2022) Post-16 education outcomes by ethnicity in England
14 As above.
15 Scottish Government (2023) Summary statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations

Participation in apprenticeships

As outlined in the introduction minority ethnic participation in apprenticeships remains below Scottish Government targets in a number of areas.

For **Foundation Apprenticeships** in 2021/22 of 4,122 new starts 7.5% self-identified as being from a minority ethnic background at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6. Proportions of minority ethnic individuals enrolling on SCQF Level 4/5 FAs have increased slightly from 2.1% in 2019/20 to 2.7% in 2021/22. Business Skills at Level 6 continues to be the most prominent framework chosen by individuals identifying as minority ethnic.[16]

Modern Apprenticeship data for Q3 2023/24[17] (1st April to 29th December 2023) shows that by the end of the quarter, there were 18,758 total MA starts. Of this figure, 4.2% self-identified as being from a minority ethnic background (Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group). This is an increase from 663 to 790 individuals, relative to Q3 2022/23 where 3.3% of MA starters self-identified as being from a minority ethnic background.

For **Graduate Apprenticeships** there were 1,166 new starts in 2021/22. The proportion of these GAs who self-identified as minority ethnic was 4.1%, a decrease from 5.1% in 2020/21. This amounts to a decrease from 59 to 46 minority ethnic GAs. The proportion of minority ethnic individuals was highest in the Cyber Security framework (11.1%) followed by IT: Software Development (10.2%).[18]

Minority ethnic individuals' experiences in the paid labour market

The Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework[19] states that despite generally high attainment at school and high rates of entry into further and higher education, statistically **ethnic minority people are not receiving the labour market advantages which should be expected** considering their positive educational outcomes.[20]

16 SDS (2023) Foundation Apprenticeship Report
17 SDS (2024) Modern Apprenticeships Statistics
18 SDS (2022) Graduate Apprenticeship Report
19 Scottish Government (2016) Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016 to 2030
20 EHRC (2018) Is Scotland Fairer?

Around 5% of the working-age population in Scotland is from a minority ethnic background.[21] The employment rate for Scotland's minority ethnic population remains **consistently lower** than the employment rate for the White population. The employment rate for minority ethnic groups aged 16-64 was 66% between October 2022 – September 2023. This was 10% lower than the employment rate for White groups (76%).[22] Where they are employed, minority ethnic people are over-represented in certain sectors.[23][24] For example, they are more likely to work in the Accommodation and Food Services sector than the White population.[25] Minority ethnic individuals are disproportionately **more likely to work in low-paying sectors and less likely to hold managerial or senior position**s in business. They are also more likely to be self-employed.[26]

In 2019, the ethnicity pay gap in Scotland was 10.3%.[27] This is reflected in evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation[28] that minority ethnic individuals experience **in-work poverty** rates three times that of their White counterparts. In minority ethnic families where all family members work full-time, they are nearly twice as likely to experience in-work poverty. Regardless of their level of education, ethnic minority individuals experience unemployment at much higher rates than White individuals. The subsequent inequalities in employment and income negatively impact these groups' standard of living and experience of poverty.[29]

In the workplace, results from the Scottish Household Survey show minority ethnic people are **more likely to have experienced discrimination**.[30] **17% of minority ethnic respondents said they had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months compared to 8% of White respondents**. Recruitment processes can also **make it harder for minority ethnic people to enter the workplace in the first place**, as there may be an under-recognition among employers of minority ethnic employees' skills and experience, reducing their chances of employment or further progression when in work.[31] Khan (2020) highlights research that found that people with Asian or African sounding names were less likely to be invited to job interviews.[32] For Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, discrimination in employment manifests itself in several ways, including discrimination in recruitment and career progression, losing a job after revealing their identity, as well as feeling the need to hide their ethnic background.[33]

21   Scottish Government (2021) Analysis of labour market outcomes of Scotland's minority ethnic population
22   Scottish Government (2023) Scotland's Labour Market Overview
23   EHRC (2018) Is Scotland Fairer?
24   Khan, O., Runnymede (2020) The Colour of Money: How racial inequalities obstruct a fair and resilient economy
25   Fraser of Allander Institute (2020) Economic Outcomes for Minority Ethnic Groups in Scotland
26   SDS (2023) Equality Evidence Review
27   ONS (2019) Ethnicity Pay Gaps

28   Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) Poverty in Scotland
29   EHRC (2016) Healing a divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy
30   Scottish Government (2019) Scottish Household Survey 2018: Annual Report
31   Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2013) In-work Poverty, ethnicity and workplace cultures
32   Khan, O., Runnymede (2020) The Colour of Money: How racial inequalities obstruct a fair and resilient economy
33   The Traveller Movement (2017) The pervasive discrimination and prejudice experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

The business case for racial and ethnic diversity

This section highlights the value of racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace, including benefits to both organisations and employees.

There is a strong business case for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace with **clear benefits for employers and workers in relation to productivity, profitability, innovation and skills**. In general, diverse businesses and organisations tend to be more successful. The evidence highlights that when considering the need for ethnic diversity in apprenticeships, employers should consider whether they have access to a wide talent pool if minority ethnic individuals are under-represented in their businesses, as well as the gains to be made by better reflecting customer and community diversity.[34]

The business case for gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity is clearly stated across numerous research reports.[35] **The higher the rate of diversity in an organisation, the more likely they are to outperform non-diverse companies.**

Quantifiable business benefits

The quantifiable benefit of equality and diversity is highlighted by the McGregor-Smith Review, which stated that the potential benefit that the UK economy will see if minority ethnic individuals were fully represented in the labour market would be an **additional £24 billion a year.** Minority ethnic individuals are likely to be more qualified than their White counterparts but are promoted at a lower rate.[36] Racially and ethnically diverse companies are more likely to have better than average financial returns. Other economic benefits included an increase of 58% in revenue for organisations who took steps to achieve equity and a £4.3 billion higher than average company value for organisations that reported targeted racial equity measures than those not reporting such activities.[37]

Broader business benefits

Diversity in the workplace makes organisations more effective and enables them to reach wider audiences and in return see more profit.[38] Diverse teams can reach diverse customer groups including minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ communities, and women, who all have command over an increasing share of consumer wealth in previously untapped markets. A **diverse workforce is also linked to greater employee loyalty**.[39] Additional benefits for organisations include **improvements in creativity and innovation and access to a greater variety of perspectives.**[40]

34 TUC (2013) Underrepresentation by gender and race in apprenticeships
35 McKinsey & Company (2020) Diversity wins: how inclusion matters
36 The McGregor-Smith Review (2017) Race in the workplace
37 Henley Business School (2020) The equity effect

38 Morley, T., Strategic HR Review (2018) Making the business case for diversity and inclusion: Short case studies and research papers that demonstrate best practice in HR
39 Deloitte (2018) 2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey
40 NHS England (2017) Workforce race equality: case studies of good practice from non-NHS employers

Business benefits of diverse apprenticeships

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) have produced a toolkit for employers to support them in embedding EDI within the development of apprenticeships.[41] In the toolkit, IfATE summarise the business benefits of diversity within apprenticeships and technical education as:

- Talent: inclusive employers can recruit from the widest talent pool

- Retention: diversity at work is linked to employee retention, reducing recruitment costs as employees choose to stay longer when they feel accepted and respected

- Improved financial performance: research shows that for every percentage increase in the rate of racial or gender diversity within an organisation, sales revenues also increase (9% and 3% respectively)

- Increasing new business: diverse recruitment builds a positive reputation and helps businesses win new contracts.

41 IfATE (2023) Equality, diversity and inclusion toolkit

Barriers to improving racial and ethnic diversity in apprenticeships

This section provides an overview of factors influencing minority ethnic under-representation in apprenticeships.

Occupational segregation within apprenticeships reflects the wider paid labour market

Minority ethnic participation in Scottish apprenticeships mirrors occupational segregation (where workers are unequally distributed based on demographic characteristics, such as race or ethnicity) in the paid labour market more generally. SDS research with young people found that when asked about their preferred future sector for work, minority ethnic young people were almost twice as likely to report wanting to enter the health, social care and social work sectors than White school leavers.[42]

Apprenticeship data from England shows that minority ethnic individuals remain particularly under-represented in apprenticeships in sectors where average earnings are higher such as engineering and manufacturing and over-represented in lower earning sectors such as retail, hospitality, health and social care.[43] For example, construction accounts for 5.1% of all jobs in Scotland, but has very low numbers of minority ethnic workers (1.6%).[44] The construction industry has recognised the need to recruit individuals from under-represented groups in order to move the sector to a more inclusive and positive culture.[45]

Apprenticeship providers and employers in England highlighted sectors with high representation levels of minority ethnic individuals, linking this to the cultural acceptability of certain occupations. For example, a provider delivering digital degree-level apprenticeships reported that half of their intake was from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Asian individuals. In contrast, within the construction sector most higher-level apprentices were White, despite operating in a diverse community.[46] While cultural factors provide a partial explanation, recruitment methods can reinforce occupational segregation and should therefore be examined and tailored with an EDI lens. Representation of minority ethnic apprentices differs depending on the sector subject area in England, with higher participation of apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds in information and communications technology and lower participation in the construction sector. Apprentices in health, public services and care sector are more likely to be from minority ethnic rather than White backgrounds at all levels, except at Level 4 (equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree).[47]

42 SDS (2023) Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Infographics
43 Crook, J. (2018) 'Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people'. In All change: Where next for apprenticeships?
44 Fair Work Convention (2022) Building fair work in the construction industry

45 CITB (2022) Equality and Diversity Overview 2021-2025
46 Murphy, H. & Jones, E., Learning and Work Institute (2021) Apprenticeships at level 4 and above
47 As above

Spotlight on… England's Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network

The Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network lists participation in apprenticeships by individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds as one of its priority areas, identifying challenges facing apprentices and employers, as well as offering practical suggestion to address them. Their 2022/23 Annual Report[48] shows continued growth in the proportion of minority ethnic individuals starting an apprenticeship across England. In 2019/20, representation was 13.3% and rose to 14.7% by the end of the 2021/22 academic year.

Minority ethnic representation continues to increase at apprenticeship Level 4 (equivalent to first year of an undergraduate degree) and above, indicating the potential for more minority ethnic people to enter higher-paying jobs with greater possibilities for career progression.

Ethnic minority representation is unevenly distributed across all age groups. Apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be over the age of 25, with representation of younger people, particularly in the 16-19 age range still decreasing as a proportion of all apprentices across England. The Sutton Trust[49] found that under-representation is strongest among 16-18 year olds, where White British people account for 90% of new starts, and for 19-24 year olds where White British account for 83% of starts. For those aged 25 and over, distribution by ethnic grouping is much closer to that of the wider working-age population.

The Department for Education (DfE) reports that in England, minority ethnic individuals are more likely to be on an apprenticeship at Level 7 (the highest level of apprenticeship available in England, equivalent to a Masters degree) than any other level of apprenticeship. The highest proportion of participation at Level 7 are individuals from Asian or Other backgrounds. Apprentices from Black backgrounds are more likely to be undertaking programmes at Level 5 (equivalent to a foundation degree – the first two years of an undergraduate degree).[50]

48 DfE (2023) Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network 2022-23 Annual Report
49 Sutton Trust (2021) The recent evolution of apprenticeships: apprenticeship pathways and participation since 2015

50 Murphy, H. & Jones, E., Learning and Work Institute (2021) Apprenticeships at level 4 and above

● **Understanding the barriers to apprenticeship participation**

In this review, barriers to minority ethnic participation in apprenticeships are categorised as **challenges for individuals**, and **challenges for employers** (although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive). It is important to note that barriers to participation have been organised in this way to help identify what is within the realm of employers to change in their own practices, and what employers can be aware of and attempt to influence in others. The aim of this distinction is not to attribute blame to minority ethnic individuals and their communities, nor to employers. Instead, it is to better understand the broader context resulting in minority ethnic under-representation in apprenticeships, and to begin to consider potential actions to address this.

Challenges for individuals

● **School qualifications heavily influence young minority ethnic people's career ambitions**

Research carried out by Skills Development Scotland highlights that minority ethnic young people are less likely than White young people to report that their parents/carers or their hobbies and interests had a strong influence on their career aspirations – 67% compared to 78%, and 70% compared to 76% respectively. In contrast, 86% of minority ethnic young people said **their school qualifications were the key influencer on their career ambitions**, while 71% of White respondents said the same.[51]

Research from the rUK has found that the main reasons for under-representation in apprenticeships include choosing more academic routes; parents preferring young people to get a university degree; under-achievement in compulsory education; language difficulties; lacking the necessary networks to get placements; and a lack of careers information, advice and guidance. Further, it is noted that it is not possible to identify whether under-representation results from a low level of applications to apprenticeships, or whether applications are less likely to be successful, or a combination of both.[52]
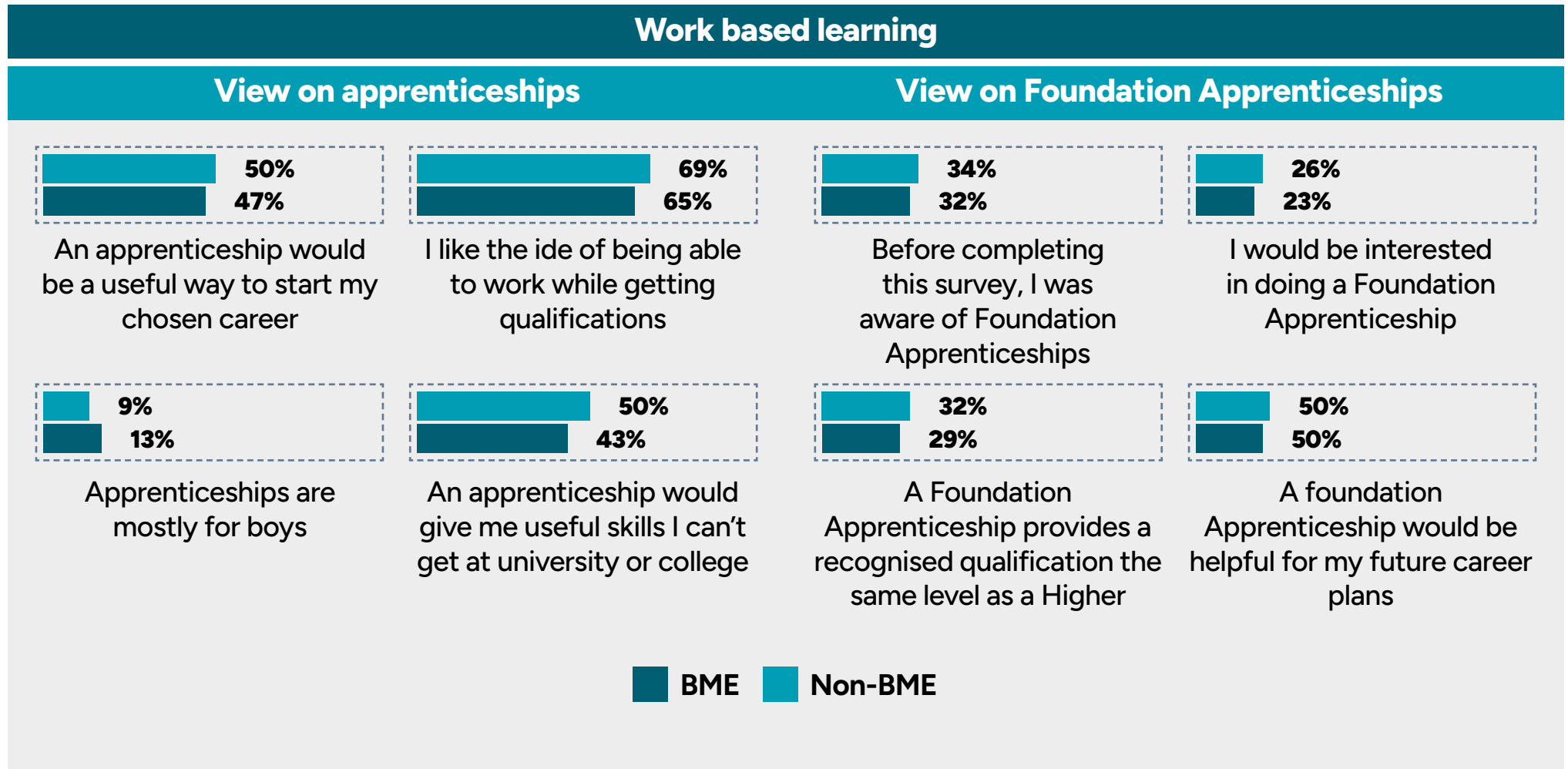
● **Minority ethnic young people's lower awareness of apprenticeships impacts recruitment**

SDS research into young people's attitudes to apprenticeships confirms some of the factors contributing to minority ethnic individuals' under-representation. The Young People in Scotland survey (2022)[53] involved 1,533 school pupils aged between 11 and 18 and findings (see Figure 4.1) showed **lower awareness of and interest in pursuing a Foundation Apprenticeship** (FA) for minority ethnic pupils. Findings also showed minority ethnic pupils **did not view FAs as equally recognised qualifications compared to Scottish Highers**. Minority ethnic pupils were also more likely to believe that apprenticeships are mostly for boys compared to White pupils.

51 fDS (2023) <u>Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Infographics</u>
52 Chadderton, C. & Wischmann, A. (2014) <u>Racialised norms in apprenticeship systems in England and Germany</u>

53 SDS (2023) <u>Young people in Scotland Research 2022 Equality Infographic</u>

Barriers to improving racial and ethnic diversity in apprenticeships

Figure 4.1: A comparison of attitudes towards apprenticeships in Scotland between BME and Non-BME pupils (11-18 year old).

Work based learning

View on apprenticeships		View on Foundation Apprenticeships	
50% (Non-BME) / **47%** (BME) An apprenticeship would be a useful way to start my chosen career	**69%** (Non-BME) / **65%** (BME) I like the ide of being able to work while getting qualifications	**34%** (Non-BME) / **32%** (BME) Before completing this survey, I was aware of Foundation Apprenticeships	**26%** (Non-BME) / **23%** (BME) I would be interested in doing a Foundation Apprenticeship
9% (Non-BME) / **13%** (BME) Apprenticeships are mostly for boys	**50%** (Non-BME) / **43%** (BME) An apprenticeship would give me useful skills I can't get at university or college	**32%** (Non-BME) / **29%** (BME) A Foundation Apprenticeship provides a recognised qualification the same level as a Higher	**50%** (Non-BME) / **50%** (BME) A foundation Apprenticeship would be helpful for my future career plans

BME   **Non-BME**

● **Racialised norms shape career choices**

Some researchers have argued that studies on apprenticeships and ethnicity tend to confirm rather than challenge stereotypes of minority groups. A review of the literature exploring apprenticeships in England and Germany suggested that racialised norms can shape expectations of who does what in the labour market and training systems and where people 'fit'. It argues that studies can often make assumptions that young people can make (relatively) free choices **without considering the racial segmentation of the labour market** which shapes worker expectations.[54]

Cultural barriers to apprenticeship participation

In the case of British Asians in particular, it is argued that cultural barriers to apprenticeship participation may stem from migration trends from their countries of origin. For example, due to similarities in training, Indian people were encouraged to move to the UK to become doctors. As a result, highly educated Indians relocated to Britain and are now parents or grandparents. **Their own experiences of education as a route to a successful career leads them to promote the more traditional academic options to the next generation**. In addition to this, as with the wider population, minority ethnic individuals may also have long-held beliefs and traditions about appropriate gender roles and suitable careers which may make apprenticeships seem an unacceptable option.[55]

Spotlight on... awareness of apprenticeship opportunities as a barrier impacting minority ethnic individuals

A qualitative study conducted by The Learning and Work Institute (2021)[56] interviewed a range of apprentices across England found a key barrier to entering apprenticeships to be lack of promotion of apprenticeship opportunities. Apprentices reported that they had only become aware of higher-level apprenticeships through opportunistic encounters, by doing their own active research or through their employer. IfATE report that a lack of awareness of the existence and availability of apprenticeships is a barrier that disproportionately affects minority ethnic individuals, with 33% of Black individuals responding to a survey by Youth Employment UK saying they had never had anyone discuss apprenticeships with them compared to 13% of White respondents.[57]

54 Chadderton, C. & Wischmann, A. (2014) <u>Racialised norms in apprenticeship systems in England and Germany</u>
55 TUC (2013) <u>Underrepresentation by gender and race in apprenticeships</u>

56 Murphy, H. & Jones, E., Learning and Work Institute (2021) <u>Apprenticeships at level 4 and above</u>
57 IfATE (2023) <u>Equality, diversity and inclusion toolkit</u>

- **Intersectionality brings additional barriers for minority ethnic individuals**

Barriers experienced by individuals with multiple protected characteristics are important to consider also. For example, a Young Women's Trust survey of 500 apprentices in England found that minority ethnic female apprentices were more likely than their White counterparts to be employed for fewer hours per week. Additionally, they found that formal training provided to women from a minority ethnic background was reduced compared to those of their White peers.[58] Progress in advancing EDI in the workplace appears challenging, particularly when different aspects of employees' identities intersect and compound the disadvantage or discrimination they face. For example, in Scotland, 72% of Black and minority ethnic women in the private sector and 86% of those in the public sector report having experienced discrimination at work.[59]

Spotlight on... the impact of support from family and friends on apprenticeship uptake

ASeveral studies have illustrated the strength of influence that parents and carers have over young people when making career decisions, and the importance of ensuring that family members are aware of apprenticeships and able to see their benefits.[60] Research reviewed by the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network indicates that family and friends can be unsupportive of ethnic minority young people's career decisions to enrol on an apprenticeship, making it harder for young people to pursue this option. Indeed, a common concern of prospective apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds is how to persuade their parents to allow them to do an apprenticeship.

Young apprentices from an ethnic minority background were nearly three times more likely to say that their friends and family were unsupportive of their decision to pursue an apprenticeship (42% compared to 15% of students from a White Background). 1 in 10 of apprentices from a minority ethnic background felt their friends and family were 'very unsupportive' compared to 4% of White apprentices. In terms of receiving practical support from family members with their apprenticeship application, young apprentices from a minority ethnic background were 16% less likely to say that they had received support with their application compared to those from a White background. However, minority ethnic apprentices were more likely to report receiving support from other sources compared to those from a White background.[61]

58 Young Women's Trust (2017) <u>Young women and apprenticeships: Still not working?</u>
59 Scottish Parliament (2020) <u>Race equality, employment and skills: making progress?</u>

60 Barnes et al., Warwick Institute for Employment Research (2020) <u>The role of parents and carers in providing careers guidance and how they can be better supported</u>
61 Doherty, K. & Holt-White, E., The Sutton Trust (2021) <u>Apprenticeship Outreach</u>

Challenges for employers

● **Minority ethnic young people's perceptions of barriers to their career**

The SDS Young People's Career Ambitions survey collects insight from school leavers across Scotland on their career choices, influences and motivations. Results from 2020/21 school leavers showed that **minority ethnic young people were highly likely to feel that being discriminated against in their future career was a potential barrier**.[62] Minority ethnic respondents were over twice as likely as their White counterparts to perceive being discriminated against as a barrier to their future career (39% compared to 18%).[63]

● **Inconsistent support with career development for minority ethnic individuals**

The Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey (2021) monitors apprenticeship experiences and outcomes in England. Findings showed that where apprentices are taken on by employers, there is not always a **consistent level of support with career development**. White apprentices were more likely than apprentices from a minority ethnic background to report that they had been made aware of post-apprenticeship training options, at 72% and 64% respectively. For apprenticeship non-completers, the most common contributing reason for not completing the qualification was issues with the quality

of the apprenticeship (70% for White non-completers, 68% for BAME non-completers). However, 44% of BAME non-completers also reported **issues with apprenticeship delivery** being a factor – this finding was significantly different from the wider sample.[64]

● **Lower conversion rates for minority ethnic apprentices**

 Conversion rates for apprenticeship applications differ between ethnicities. For example, in 2016/17, a quarter of apprenticeship applications in England on the UK government site 'Find an Apprenticeship' were from minority ethnic individuals, but these applications were not converted into starts as often as applications from White people (half the rate of White individuals).[65] A report including international comparisons produced by the Institute for Employment Studies suggests that **employer recruitment practices may be discriminatory**[66] and recommends further investigating why apprenticeship applications do not always translate to employee starts, and whether training providers could work more closely with employers on recruitment approaches which support diversity.

62 SDS (2023) Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Briefing Paper
63 SDS (2023) Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Infographics
64 IFF Research (2022) Apprenticeships evaluation 2021 – learners

65 Crook, J. (2018) 'Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people'. In All change: Where next for apprenticeships?
66 IES (2013) 'Report for union learn and the National Apprenticeship Service: Research into under-representation, by gender and ethnicity', in Apprenticeships IES Report 503

● **Non-inclusive recruitment and progression practices**

Employer recruitment practices can be especially damaging in smaller companies where **word of mouth and recommendations** are more likely to contribute to informal approaches to recruitment. These practices are considerably less likely to pull from a wide and diverse talent pool, and **generally lead to the recruitment of staff from similar backgrounds at the expense of non-traditional and under-represented entrants.**[67] Career progression for minority ethnic individuals can be restricted if it occurs through informal networks, if there are a lack of ethnic minority role models or mentors at higher levels within organisations who might provide support and advice, or if there is a gap between equality and diversity policies and practice in the workplace.[68]

A survey conducted by the CIPD (2021) with 2,102 employees across the UK, explored issues around race at work. Findings suggested that transparency is crucial to ensure more racially equal organisations. Training line managers to support the career development of diverse employees was a key recommendation arising from the research.[69] Further suggestions included tackling racial discrimination within the organization by having **clear anti-discrimination policies and accountabilities for all staff, and equality and diversity training at all levels**.

● **Under-use of positive action**

Employers are often unaware of or lack understanding as to why positive action is necessary. Knowing more about their workforce will help employers understand where groups may be at a disadvantage or underrepresented, and establish a strong evidence base for taking action.[70]

Spotlight on… governmental backing of positive action

Research has found that positive action in recruitment is under-utilised. It has been suggested that within the public sector some organisations might be reluctant to use positive action because of "fear" about how it might be perceived or portrayed. The Scottish Government has recommended that public authorities make more use of positive action to address minority ethnic under-representation in the public sector workforce, for example.[71] Examples of good practice around positive action measures adopted by some employers can be found in Section 4 of this review.

67 TUC (2013) Underrepresentation by gender and race in apprenticeships
68 As above.
69 CIPD (2021) Race Inclusion Reports - Report 3 - Ensuring equality of career progression opportunities

70 EHRC (2019) Exploring positive action as a tool to address under-representation in apprenticeships
71 Scottish Parliament (2020) Race Equality, Employment and Skills: Making Progress?

- **Homogenisation of minority ethnic groups can obscure important differences in needs and participation**

It is crucial to adequately recognise and account for how **participation and needs may differ between diverse groups**.[72] For example, figures from apprenticeships in England show that British Asians are significantly under-represented in apprenticeships when compared to their population share. In contrast, the participation of individuals from Black, African, and Caribbean backgrounds in apprenticeships reflects their representation in the wider population.[73] Monitoring and understanding these differences will enable more targeted action to improve participation.

- **Implementation challenges – moving from talk to action**

Evidence highlights the persistence of challenges for employers in translating talk and policies about equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) into action. This may partly be a result of employer perceptions of equality issues and may also be influenced by the ethnic diversity of organisational decision-makers themselves. Research has shown that **majority groups perceive the extent of inequity differently to minority groups**. For example, the Royal Academy of Engineering found that White male engineers perceived the working culture in their sector to be more inclusive than White female engineers did, who in turn perceived it to be more inclusive than engineers from minority ethnic backgrounds.[74] Research reports widespread discrimination in the UK STEM workforce, where almost 40% of minority ethnic employees report discrimination in the workplace due to their ethnicity.[75]

Research conducted by Hays (2021) with over 3,000 employers and employees from across the UK revealed that **respondents anticipated various obstacles in the way of making improvements in EDI at work**.[76] Almost half of the professionals surveyed (45%) expected that the largest challenge they could face would be overcoming resistance to change in their workforce. A lack of employee engagement was also expected to hinder progress towards improving ED&I (41%). Linked to this, it was expected that actions may not be perceived as a business priority, and that this could pose a problem for securing business-wide commitment. Similarly, some employers expected that there would not be enough resources attributed to ED&I initiatives, which would hinder meaningful progress.

Employer concerns about the potential challenges they could face seem to concentrate around **positioning ED&I in a way which secures buy-in across their business**. This reiterates the need for a holistic approach to understanding the need for and value of ED&I in the workplace. This would involve an understanding of individual, organisational, and societal benefits to workplace diversity. A business which understands and embraces ED&I will be able to recruit the best employees from a wider talent pool. They will be better placed to innovate, be creative and compete in the modern market.[77]

72 EHRC (2019) <u>Exploring positive action as a tool to address under-representation in apprenticeships</u>
73 Ali, S. (2017) <u>The DfE's blanket BAME strategy is cloth-eared</u>
74 APPG on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM (2021) <u>Inquiry into equity in the STEM workforce</u>

75 APPG on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM (2021) <u>Inquiry into equity in the STEM workforce</u>
76 Hays (2021) <u>Equity, diversity & inclusion in 2021: all talk & no action?</u>
77 Hays (2021) <u>Equity, diversity & inclusion in 2021: all talk & no action?</u>

● **The need for a clear narrative on the business benefits of diversity**

The review of the evidence suggests that despite increased conversations around ED&I, businesses are still lacking clarity on the benefits of greater diversity in the workforce. Research highlights that equality and diversity agendas are not often underpinned by a clear narrative of how diversity can improve innovation and creativity. Employers are, however, increasingly aware of external drivers to increase diversity such as corporate reputation and securing ongoing support from investors.[78]

78 Enterprise Research Centre (2021) Equality, diversity and inclusion in UK foundation industries: an ERC report for UKRI

Improving racial and ethnic diversity in apprenticeships

This section provides an overview of good practice and suggestions for employers to improve the representation of minority ethnic groups in apprenticeships.

Employers need to emphasise career opportunities provided by apprenticeships

Employers have a key role in young people's career information landscapes – they are **instrumental in demonstrating to minority ethnic young people and their communities the full range of career opportunities available** across a wide range of sectors through apprenticeships.[79]

Promoting apprenticeships as a genuine alternative to higher education

Entering higher education appears to be the **dominant aspirational route** for minority ethnic young people and their families, and is the most reported initial destination for all ethnic groups (see Figure 2.1). In apprenticeships, minority ethnic individuals remain under-represented, particularly in higher earning sectors such as engineering and manufacturing, while they are over-represented in lower-earning sectors like retail and hospitality. Employers can address this by offering higher level apprenticeships and targeting recruitment of

minority ethnic individuals into these roles to **provide a genuine alternative to university degrees**.[80] It is crucial that parents or carers are fully included in discussions with careers professionals and employers at school alongside their young person,[81] to raise awareness and the esteem of **apprenticeships within minority ethnic communities** to increase the likelihood that they are encouraged and supported by their family to consider apprenticeships as a viable alternative to higher education.[82]

Using role models to raise awareness and esteem of apprenticeships

Using role models and case studies to show the positive opportunities and careers available via apprenticeships can help **address common apprenticeship misconceptions**. The TUC (2013)[83] emphasise the effectiveness of visible role models for young people from diverse backgrounds. They recommend that employers work with apprenticeship training providers to identify diverse current apprentices who can be ambassadors. This is particularly effective for school-age young people, who value seeing role models who share a similar background to them and in turn begin to feel that **apprenticeships are a viable option for 'people like them'**.[84]

79 Crook, J. (2018) 'Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people'. In All change: **Where next for apprenticeships?**
80 Crook, J. (2018) Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people. In All change: **Where next for apprenticeships?**
81 DfE (2023) **Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network 2022-23 Annual Report**

82 TUC (2013) **Underrepresentation by gender and race in apprenticeships**
83 As above.
84 Crook, J. (2018) 'Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people'. In All change: **Where next for apprenticeships?**

Spotlight on...providing and promoting higher level apprenticeships[85]

Apprentices interviewed in England as part of a project exploring how higher apprenticeships at Level 4 (equivalent to first year of undergraduate degree) and above can support social mobility for individuals from diverse backgrounds, offered suggestions for improving access to higher-level apprenticeships. These focused on promoting opportunities more widely to individuals from a range of backgrounds to address common misconceptions.

Apprentices suggested that employers and training providers need to emphasise during their promotion of apprenticeship opportunities to young people:

- **the range of opportunities available**

- **the high quality of training provided**

- **pay rates**

- **level of status in a workplace**

- **support they can expect from their provider and employer (viewed as a key determinant of success for higher-level apprenticeships by apprentices themselves).**

Apprentices also suggested specific ideas for employers to increase participation in higher-level apprenticeships by:

- ensuring employers open their apprenticeship offers to new staff, rather than simply enrolling existing employees

- providing financial support for apprentices at the start of their programme

- equipping employers with practical guidance and resources to engage and recruit a more diverse workforce.

85 Learning and Work Institute (2021) Apprenticeships at Level 4 and above

Careers advisers and trusted adults play a key role supporting minority ethnic young people's career ambitions

The Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland spoke to young people on Modern Apprenticeships in Glasgow who emphasised the importance of strong links with careers advisers in school for young people to support transitions from school to further training or work opportunities. This was particularly important for young people who had stopped attending school but were receiving additional support. Young people reported benefiting from being strongly encouraged to apply for a Modern Apprenticeship by an adult they knew well, such as a youth worker or school careers adviser. These stories illustrate the importance for young people to have well developed, trusted relationships with adults in school or community settings who are regularly in contact with the young person and are supportive in helping them realise their career ambitions. Community organisations were also found to have an important role in supporting young people into apprenticeships.[86] Employers and training providers therefore need to continue building strong relationships with careers advisers and community organisations.

Dedicated programmes of support for minority ethnic individuals

The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) Employer Equalities Group (EEQ) report[87] on making apprenticeships more accessible and attractive to care experienced young people contains various recommendations which could be transferred to the context of increasing the ethnic diversity of apprenticeships across Scotland. For example, the report suggests that mentoring can be invaluable for individuals from under-represented groups as a way of supporting them to sustain their apprenticeship to completion. They report that almost 40% of Scottish employers do not currently have dedicated programmes in place for supporting individuals from under-represented groups.

Practical suggestions for increasing the inclusivity of apprenticeships

SDS have developed a number of guides for employers available on the Apprenticeships.scot website with a practical focus on sourcing and retaining diverse apprentices.[88]

IfATE (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education) work with employers in England and recommend employers take a number of practical steps to ensure that apprenticeships are more inclusive to individuals from minority ethnic groups, including[89]:

86 IPPR Scotland (2021) Delivering a fair work recovery in Scotland
87 SAAB EEQ (2024) How do we make apprenticeships more accessible and attractive to care experienced young people?
88 SDS (2024) Inclusive recruitment guides
89 IfATE (2023) Equality, diversity and inclusion toolkit

- **Data:** using data to better understand the local community and recognise when the apprenticeship cohort or workforce is not reflective of diversity in the community. Track and monitor the diversity of apprentices at each stage of the process through the data: applications; starts; progression; and completion. Use this data to develop an evidence-based and targeted approach to recruitment and retention strategies

- **Positive action:** use positive action to increase participation of minority ethnic apprentices – set targets and monitor these regularly

- **Diverse role models:** locate and increase the visibility of any diverse role models to support recruitment and progression or completion campaigns. Highlight acheivements of apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds and nominate them for awards where possible. Young people value seeing and meeting role models that come from a similar background. This is especially important for minority ethnic young people who may not have previously considered apprenticeships as being for 'people like them'

- **Target advertising and recruitment:** advertise apprenticeship vacancies via channels and organisations that minority ethnic individuals and communities may be more likely to see. Where possible, advertise apprenticeship vacancies locally first before adding vacancies to larger employment websites

- **Mentoring and networking:** provide mentoring and networking support for apprentices from under-represented groups so that apprentices feel supported

- **Promote inclusive behaviour:** promote inclusive behaviour focused on race and ethnicity in your organisation. Promote allyship and provide race awareness and anti-racist training for all.

90 Crook, J. (2018) Eradicating the opportunity deficit for black, Asian and minority ethnic young people. In <u>All change: Where next for apprenticeships?</u>

Spotlight on... positive action: employer case studies[91]

Building Futures is a female-run community interest company in the construction sector focusing on house renovations. Based in Glasgow, the company has a particular focus on young women from minority ethnic backgrounds. It runs practical workshops, arranges industry visits and provides mentoring for young women to apply for apprenticeship opportunities.

Barclays runs various positive action initiatives targeted at ethnic minority groups to promote apprenticeships to those living in ethnically diverse areas. This has included engaging in outreach activities with disadvantaged communities, including minority ethnic groups, to promote apprenticeship opportunities. In the four years to 2017, 43% of the 3,000 apprentices it took on came from an minority ethnic background.

Capgemini has rolled out numerous positive action initiatives aimed at improving its minority ethnic and gender representation in apprenticeships. In particular, during 2015/16 it focused on promoting visible minority ethnic role models and partnered with Bright Network (which connects graduates with employers, and has a 39% ethnic minority membership) to target students. In 2016, Capgemini's percentage of minority ethnic graduate and apprentice hires increased to 36% after remaining at just under 30% for several years.

91 EHRC (2019) Exploring positive action as a tool to address under-representation in apprenticeships

Evidence gaps

The available evidence provides valuable information in terms of the business case for greater ethnic diversity within apprenticeship programmes; barriers to participation and progression; and offers some suggestions for improving ethnic diversity across apprenticeships.

There is however a lack of specific research and evidence on several areas:

- Research and data relating specifically to Scottish apprenticeships and the experiences of minority ethnic apprentices in Scotland, including granular data for different ethnic groups

- Intersectionality between race and other protected equality characteristics and how these may impact on apprenticeship experiences, recruitment and progression

- Intersectionality between race and other markers of inequality such as care experience and poverty and how these may impact on apprenticeship experiences, recruitment and progression

- In-depth qualitative research detailing lived experiences of minority ethnic individuals undertaking apprenticeships

- Post-apprenticeship outcomes for minority ethnic apprentices

- Pathways of minority ethnic individuals that lead to apprenticeships

- Career influencers for minority ethnic individual apprentices

- Challenges faced by employers in implementing race and ethnicity diversity policies and ensuring recruitment and retention strategies are evidence-led

- Good practice examples and case studies focused on minority ethnic apprentices.

Apprentice Voice, is a new, streamlined rolling approach to gathering feedback from across the apprenticeship family, developed by the SDS Evaluation and Research team. It should be noted that insights from this research could help to fill some of the gaps identified above. Apprentice Voice automatically distributes surveys to all apprentices and gathers feedback at the start, completion and 15 months post-apprenticeship. Depending on sample size, data will be broken down to enable comparisons between ethnic groups. Analysis and insight will be strengthened by additional deep-dives and qualitative/lived-experience research with apprentices.

Implications

Diversifying apprenticeships is not something that will happen overnight. Efforts are required from a range of stakeholders to target, inform, and support minority ethnic individuals to ensure that they are afforded the same opportunities as those most advantaged in society.[92]

This review suggests the following key implications for the Commission on Race in Apprenticeships to consider:

- **Employers cannot solve the issue alone** and, nor can it be solved immediately. However, employers should take a proactive approach to removing identified barriers to apprenticeships for individuals from a minority ethnic background. It should also be ensured that conversations around addressing barriers to improving racial and ethnic diversity in apprenticeships are not about attributing or shifting blame

- **Supporting employers** towards adopting a more holistic understanding of why equality, diversity and inclusion are important and the full range of benefits they bring to individuals, employers and society. Supporting employers to transform words into tangible action. This is an area many employers continue to struggle with and require further support to achieve. Identifying practical steps employers can take, including more considered recruitment practices and appropriate use of positive action

- **Understanding the workforce** better through more detailed reporting of employee characteristics, including breaking this reporting down by specific ethnic group where possible. This would support employers to establish where groups may be at a disadvantage or under-represented. In addition, establishing a strong evidence base that recognises differences in representation and needs of various minority ethnic groups will encourage the development of an approach that does not homogenise ethnic groups — employers must resist a one-size fits all solution

- **Recording case studies** from employers who have already identified effective approaches to improving racial and ethnic diversity in the workforce, specifically in apprenticeships. Sharing learning, good practice, and case studies between employers. Learning can be taken from businesses of any size, but a range of approaches should be shared to account for businesses which may not have the same level of resources to commit to equality, diversity and inclusion

- **Recognising and supporting** the need for cultural change. Many employers are uncomfortable discussing racial and ethnic disparity in the workplace. Broader employer culture must be changed to support and encourage employers to not only acknowledge where there are issues, but crucially, to act on this.

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92 Doherty, K. & Holt-White, E., The Sutton Trust (2021) Apprenticeship Outreach: Engaging with under-represented groups to improve social mobility

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SDS (2023) Young People's Career Ambitions 2022/23 Infographics

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Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Appendix 2 – Membership of the Commission

Appendix 2: Members of the Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

- Sharon Blyfield OBE, Head of Early Careers & Apprenticeships GB Coca-Cola (Chair)

- Charandeep Singh, Chamber of Commerce, Depute Chief Executive Scottish Chambers of Commerce (Deputy Chair)

- Sonja Jillich, Associate Software Engineer, JP Morgan Chase

- Khadija Mohammed, Associate Dean, ED&I University of the West of Scotland

- Nathalie Cutting, High Growth & Entrepreneurs Manager, Barclays

- Saj Sharif, Founder and CEO, Zen Consultants

- Mavis Daniels, Owner and Manager, Sivam Hairdressing

- Naila Wood, Head of Social Impact, Balfour Beatty

- Nazim Hamid, Governance Advisor, Glasgow City Council/Board Equality Champion SDS

- Deepi Dhaliwal, Depute Head Teacher, Lorne Street Primary School

- Sara Medel Jimenez- University of Edinburgh

- Philip McGuinness, Assistant Director, Scottish Funding Council

- Fergus McMillan, Head of Equality & Diversity, Skills Development Scotland

- Sharon McIntyre, Head of CIAG Operations, Skills Development Scotland

- Shona Mitchell, Head of Operations - South, Skills Development Scotland

- Maxine McClintock, Communication Engagement & Manager, SAAB

Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Appendix 3 – Expert contributors

Appendix 3: Expert contributors

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Commission on Race in Apprenticeships

Appendix 4 – Framework for Anti-racism for Employers

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Investing in a Diverse Workforce: an anti-racism framework for employers

To build equitable and inclusive workplaces, the workforce must be representative of the communities they seek to serve, and yet ethnically diverse communities are considerably underrepresented in the workforce, especially in leadership positions.

Employers have a legal and moral duty to ensure that all employees/ apprentices can work in an environment that is free from harassment and that they can benefit equally from the opportunities it provides. Despite meaningful progress, achieving workplace equity has proved challenging. Supporting the advancement of an ethnically diverse workforce requires organisations to adopt a top-down and bottom-up approach. This requires visible and senior ownership demonstrated through senior responsibility, sponsorship, scrutiny and accountability. It also ensures that the voices of those with lived experience of racial harassment are given due prominence, while being clear that tackling these issues is everyone's responsibility.

To support employers in taking action, this framework can offer guidance on how to promote anti-racist practice in the workplace.

Statements of Intent:

1. Fostering an anti-racist culture of understanding

- it is important for all staff and in particular, senior leaders to develop a nuanced understanding of racism and whiteness and how it manifests within institutions. It is important to have a shared language around basic racial literacy in order to name racism, understand it and then be able to change practice.

- Boards, committees and advisory groups which specifically deal with racism must be led by those with lived experience or specific expertise in the area. Subsequent guidance on best practice will be nurtured and actioned by Senior Leadership who will create a culture intolerant of racial harassment and systemic racism. Making race equality a regular feature on all committee agendas will ensure that these aims are prioritized consistently. Similarly, systematic, effective use of Equality Impact Assessments will aid in ensuring anti-racist practice.

2. Constructing systematic, anti-racist development practices

- Induction and continuing development models must be robustly anti-racist for apprentices and staff. Specific race equity training must explore institutional racism, white privilege, power and microaggressions. Moreover, pedagogical and leadership training must also incorporate attention to racial justice, so the practice and processes promote a consistent message. More importantly, ensure co-creative processes are occurring across the organisation. Furthermore, this facilitates a broad structure for developing/implementing institutional action plans. Development plans must prioritize senior leadership as key drivers of this activity in order to create a strong, clear and repeated anti-racist message.

3. Investing in a diverse workforce

- Staff in Scotland's public institutions should reflect diversity at all levels. Approaches to recruitment require review in order to achieve this; some actions will include: complete and useful feedback to unsuccessful applicants, transparent promotion processes, and published ethnicity data of applications, shortlisting and appointments. Where necessary, positive action measures/sponsoring approaches will be utilised to reflect commitment to equity. In so doing we benefit from the talent of the whole population.

- National mentoring/BME networks role models across institutions exist interviews for BME staff.

4. Recording and responding effectively to racist incidents

- Any occurrence perceived to be racist by the targeted individual or witness, will be reported through a secure online system so individuals can flag incidents which occur within live and virtual learning environments without fear of victimisation. Built-in support will include definitions, confirmation of receipt, the choice to anonymise the victim's identity, clear outline of the process and signposting to support services.

- Organisations will respond to reporting parties within 5 working days or 3 working days if considered 'high-risk' (as stated within Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman guidelines). Where possible, we will resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction. In addition, live, statistical data available on the secure system will include number of reports, investigations, outcomes and external appeals in order to instil faith in the system and establish transparency

5. Monitoring and reviewing organisational race data

- The apprentices process will be two-fold. 1. A named, trained member of staff or team will monitor trends that identify areas of action and report to senior management, Equality Diversity and

Inclusion committees as well as effected managers. 2. The data itself will be stored within internal systems that include other statistical information and be routinely reviewed as part of the quality assurance cycle.

- For staff, data collected through the reporting tool will be kept and considered by human resources/people departments. Cross referencing will facilitate identification of the possible impact on recruitment, grievance, efficacy of disciplinary processes and promotion. A rise in reporting will indicate trust within the organisation so any surges should be seen as a positive step towards recording and responding effectively. Organisational reputation will be evaluated by how patterns are addressed rather than the existence or number of reports. Over time the effectiveness in institutional responses should see a decrease in reports and improved ethos.

6   Consulting with Black community partners

- Engage in regular forums to actively work with community and apprenticeship groups to ensure the reality of experiences inform reform. In hearing and validating lived examples, we may identify trends, recruit more widely, share best practice and resources. In areas of low Black population reaching out to the community will prove essential in obtaining required support (for example counselling/advocacy). By involving the entire community, apprentices, staff and partners, there is shared leadership, agency and privilege.

7   Responsibility and Accountability

- We will set meaningful race equality outcomes that address identified inequalities. We will demonstrate progress by ensuring that these outcomes are part of our strategic plan so that our governing body/board, funders, are able to hold us to account if we do not deliver our commitments.

- We will set our race equality outcomes with the involvement of staff and apprentices and will set these in a way that upholds the requirements and spirit of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Education (Scotland) Act.

- Further, we will ensure our staff, apprentices and the public have clarity about what we want to change, how we will make this change happen and when we expect to deliver the required change.

(Adapted from the Tackling Racism on Campus Project, 2022).

This guide also includes some reflective questions that will support conversations around advancing racial equity from organisational culture change to building racial literacy among all colleagues and where dignity and respect are practiced.

Reflective Questions:

- How do you recognise the organisational and individual behaviours that maintain inequitable and racist practices in the workplace?

- Are you confident that you understand the often subtle and covert ways in which systemic racism affects people from diverse ethnic backgrounds?

- How do I start a conversation around race in the workplace, particularly if colleagues and leaders are not comfortable talking about it?

- What is that makes people who look like me stay and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds leave?

- How far do my teams, HR and DEI leads have the knowledge and expertise to help me operationalise a plan of action?

- Do you know of other leaders advancing racial equity in their organisations? Could you reach out to them?

- Does your executive leadership team feel as strongly as you do? How can you get them on board?

- Who acts as your independent voice of challenge, to make sure you don't mark your own homework? Who can you trust?

- How are your ethnically diverse colleagues centred in your organisation's roll-out of its equity plan? How do you ensure this stance is maintained?

- How are you sharing responsibility for executing and assuring you are not relying on your ethnically diverse colleagues to do the heavy lifting?

(Adapted from - Daniels, S. (2022) The Anti-Racist Organisation: Dismantling Systemic Racism in the Workplace, London, Wiley.)