



## Event

On 29 May 2014 I attended a half day conference Improving Access to Apprenticeships for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Young People at Mallinson Suite, Waltham Forest College, 707 Forest Rd, Walthamstow, London E17 4JB

Career Paths Online, in conjunction with Jasmine Scholars and Waltham Forest's Business, Employment and Skills Unit, held a conference to address BME youth unemployment and to encourage diversity in apprenticeships.

This unique conference aimed to bring together all the stakeholders involved in the provision of apprenticeships to develop partnerships and to produce a concrete framework, within which to increase significantly the number of BME apprentices.

## The Challenge

A report by the Prince's Trust warned that the recession is likely to scar the lives of almost one million people currently less than 25 and out of work, who are the main victims of this recession. Data shows that the hardest hit are young people from BME communities.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in the last three months of 2008, the unemployment rate for black people aged 16-24 was 28.8%. In 2011, this had risen to 47.4%, an increase of over 64% in three years. This is more than double the unemployment rate for young white people, which increased from 15% in 2008 to 20.8% in 2011. Figures from 2011/12 also show that of the 90,700 apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeships, only 9.3% were from BME backgrounds, in spite of the fact that 25% of online apprentice vacancy applications are from BME individuals.

This conference discussed how to increase the number of BME young people who have access to work-based learning opportunities, by promoting equality and diversity within apprenticeships.

## Conference Aims and Purpose

The conference discussed the issues faced by BME young people in finding employment and promote solutions to:

- develop an action plan to increase the number of apprentices from the BME communities in Waltham Forest and the surrounding areas of East London;
- encourage collaboration among local apprenticeship training providers, voluntary organisations, employers, schools and the London Borough of Waltham Forest to promote the recruitment of a more diverse workforce, particularly through apprenticeships.

## Overall

**This was an excellent opportunity to network and understand the issues that are affecting BME under 25s that clearly is reflected in the workforce within local government and its stakeholders.**

**Recruitment of both young and BME within the workforce is a priority for our union, so I will continue to liaise with the other attendees to draw ideas of how we can assist each other in achieving a reflective workforce, fighting discrimination together.**

Sylvia Adjei