



# Race Equality in Modern Apprenticeships

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

CRER Seminar Report

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights  
Published: June 2012



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# Introduction

**This report aims to draw together information from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights seminar on Race Equality in Modern Apprenticeships, held in May 2012. It is hoped that this seminar report will help to inform future policy and practice on widening participation in Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland.**

Modern Apprenticeships are a key element of the Scottish Government's Skills for Scotland strategy, with 25,000 apprenticeship places on offer over 2011/12 and an overall investment of £69m in 2010/11. Long standing concerns about low levels of participation of people from minority ethnic groups in apprenticeship programmes, combined with higher levels of youth unemployment in minority ethnic communities, make it vital to address the potential race equality impacts of Scottish Modern Apprenticeships.

The aims of the Race Equality in Modern Apprenticeships event were to:

- Explore issues around race equality in Modern Apprenticeships
- Inform recommendations for future policy on widening participation

The purpose of this report is not to provide a full account of the contributions made by speakers and delegates, although all contributions were valuable. Rather, the report seeks to outline the most pressing points arising from the seminar, highlighting good practice, evidence gaps and opportunities for change.

Copies of the report will be distributed to all attendees, and to Chief Executives or other senior staff in relevant organisations including Skills Development Scotland, individual Sector Skills Councils and Trades Unions. The report will also be distributed to relevant Ministers and senior civil servants in the Scottish Government.

For more information on this report or the work of the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, or to request this report in an alternative format, please contact:

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# Overview of Presentations

## Overview on participation in Modern Apprenticeships

**Hazel Mathieson, Head of Operations, Skills Development Scotland**

Hazel provided background information on Skills Development Scotland's approach to widening participation in Modern Apprenticeships.

Key points included:

- Skills Development Scotland take a proactive approach to equality, including development of Equality Schemes, Equality Impact Assessment on all products and equality training for all staff
- Equality and Diversity is also taken forward through their Equality Framework customer consultation, External Advisory Group, Internal Management Group and Equality Champions.
- Skills Development Scotland monitor participation levels but are not responsible for these – individual employers make the recruitment decisions and the pattern of participation reflects the wider labour market as a result
- Modern Apprenticeships are designed for industry, by industry to fill skills gaps; they also provide a key part of the economic recovery strategy by offering opportunities to 'earn while you learn' at intermediate level
- Opportunities are primarily targeted at 16-24 year olds and over 25s in some key sectors – these are two distinct groupings
- Construction and Hospitality remain the two largest sectors for Modern Apprenticeships, however 'newer' sectors are also important (including management, business admin and health and social care)
- Skills Development Scotland have a challenging task to achieve in placing 25,000 new Modern Apprentices over 2012; this is a priority measure for economic recovery
- Action is being taken to strengthen the position of new Modern Apprentices by developing a Work Readiness qualification to demonstrate employability (recognising that development of related skills is the responsibility of employers as well as potential and existing Apprentices)
- Pay levels of Modern Apprentices are generally significantly above the £2.60 minimum rate
- 95% of Apprenticeships take place in small-medium sized businesses
- SDS have agreed to work with BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland) in raising the profile of Modern Apprenticeships in BME communities, and are open to further working with Community and Voluntary Sector organisations

- Overall, priorities for action by SDS to improve participation across the National Training Programmes include:
  - More marketing targeted at BME groups – welcoming suggestions of how to do this / who to connect with
  - Workshops, toolkit and action plan on equalities have been developed and awareness of these is being raised amongst providers
  - Leading on the ‘Step Forward Scotland’ with helpline for employers
  - Contacting employers, including BME led businesses, regarding recruitment incentives
  - Production of case studies to challenge stereotypes and encourage participation
  - Raising awareness with schools and parents
  - Commissioned research on career choice to help understand under-representation
  - Equal Opportunities Cultural Survey of SDS staff (feedback was positive)

Additional information was provided following on from the seminar in the form of an Equality Impact Assessment carried out in 2010 by Skills Development Scotland, the results of which echoed many of the concerns, suggestions and questions raised during the course of the seminar. This can be accessed online at <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/329525/ntp%20equality%20impact%20assessment.pdf>. An edited overview of actions relating to race equality from the Equality Impact Assessment is provided as an appendix to this report (p.12)



## Trade Unions and Modern Apprenticeships

Tommy Breslin, Development Officer, Scottish Union Learning

Tommy previously co-ordinated Scottish Union Learning's Modern Apprenticeship Project, which operated between June 2010 and June 2011. He provided his perspective on the work done through this and other STUC work strands on widening participation in Modern Apprenticeships.

Key points included:

- The disproportionate impact of youth unemployment on young BME people should be recognised – approximately twice the rate of unemployment compared to the ethnic majority; Modern Apprenticeships can help to reduce this as part of a wider range of approaches
- Occupational segregation in the wider labour market is replicated within Modern Apprenticeships
- The STUC's One Workplace, Equal Rights project produced a workbook on promoting equal opportunities for Trade Union reps
- Many organisations have good policies for ensuring equal opportunities, but these often do not translate to reality
- The Modern Apprenticeship Project found that completion rates were around 20% - 25% higher for Modern Apprentices in unionised workplaces; Trade Union reps can also play a role in supporting employers to address equalities issues
- Lack of innovation in recruitment and retention strategies is a barrier to widening participation – making opportunities accessible to BME young people through better advertising and targeting is crucial
- Scottish Union Learning's online toolkit<sup>1</sup> suggests actions for employers:
  - Reviewing recruitment and selection criteria to ensure they are inclusive
  - Placing job adverts widely, including in local jobcentres and media (e.g. BME media outlets)
  - Including an Equal Opportunities statement in all job adverts
  - Concentrating on the Person Specification during interview to help avoid bias
  - Equalities monitoring of job candidates
  - Targeting people from under-represented groups in recruitment campaigns
  - Using role models / 'champions' to raise the profile of equality
- Equality networks are present in Trade Union structures and have a role to play in promoting equalities issues

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.scottishunionlearning.com/files/MAP/modern\\_apprenticeship\\_project\\_toolkit\\_final\\_sept\\_2011.pdf](http://www.scottishunionlearning.com/files/MAP/modern_apprenticeship_project_toolkit_final_sept_2011.pdf)



- The STUC's One Workplace, Equal Rights project has worked on community engagement with young people on issues around participation in the workplace

## **Career paths and aspirations of BME young people**

**Carol Young, Policy and Information Officer, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights**

Carol provided a selection of research evidence on post-school destination decisions for BME young people and broader trends for BME people in the labour market.

Key points included:

- Trends in destinations for BME school leavers vary; overall, they are more likely to access 'positive destinations' such as work, education or training
- Young people have raised concerns over lack of informal networks and guidance towards career opportunities, especially non-traditional opportunities
- Disproportionate levels of low pay and unemployment for some BME communities – could Apprenticeships help to address this?
- It should be remembered that BME older people may be particularly in need of more opportunities, but Modern Apprenticeships are not targeted at this group
- Factors affecting destinations include:
  - Qualifications – some BME groups likely to be well qualified and access University places, others will not have that option
  - Tradition – e.g. self-employment or family business, professions etc.
  - Reliance on 'labour market intermediaries' for many migrant workers means low paid, low quality jobs are prevalent
  - Need to boost family income through work
  - Eligibility for work (e.g. asylum seekers)
  - Knowledge and opinion of career options; are MAs valued?
- BME school leavers are less likely to go into work than education
- A number of labour market and income risks exist for many BME groups, including higher levels of self/family employment (how much of this is through choice and how much through restricted opportunities?), lower household incomes, higher unemployment and inactivity levels
- Common occupational areas include retail (South Asian communities), unskilled / semiskilled work (A8 nation communities)
- BME school leavers are more likely to go to University (according to the Scottish Pupil Census), however this is not true for all groups – primarily Indian and Chinese students; nevertheless, for most BME groups University drop-out rates are historically higher
- The overall BME population are more likely to have a degree, but this is skewed because a quarter of that population in Scotland are overseas students; for the



older generation, the chance of having a degree drops dramatically even in groups with relatively higher education levels

- Overall, BME people gain less career advantage from education than their white majority Scottish counterparts; recent studies have demonstrated racial bias in recruitment and selection processes
- Skills Development Scotland figures show that BME participation in Modern Apprenticeships is growing but remains relatively low; using the definition which counts all participants who did not identify as white Scottish gives a figure of 6.5%, but when considering all 'non-white' ethnicities this drops to 1.2% (figures not including those who did not report their ethnicity).
- A number of questions remain:
  - What do BME individuals think about Modern Apprenticeships? How much awareness is there?
  - Are Careers Advisers and similar workers promoting Modern Apprenticeships well to all clients?
  - Are Apprenticeships advertised too narrowly? Much recruitment seems to be either 'word of mouth' or not widely advertised
  - To what extent are BME led businesses offering apprenticeships? This could offer one way for the system to boost its profile and desirability within BME communities
  - What are the 'success stories'? Can case studies be used to promote participation?





## Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative

**Shona Honeyman, Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative Project Manager,  
Glasgow City Council**

Shona manages the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI), part of a suite of Commonwealth Games legacy initiatives being developed by Glasgow City Council. She provided an overview of the CAI's experience in widening participation.

Key points included:

- The CAI aims to ensure that Glasgow's young people are able to benefit from the employment opportunities which may arise through the Games by developing their skills through Modern Apprenticeships in the run up to 2014. Employers agreeing to take on a school leaver as a Modern Apprentice through CAI are eligible for funding up to 25% of total wage costs for the post.
- CAI's system maximises the potential for inclusiveness in its Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in several ways:
  - Promotion through schools in Glasgow; school leavers sign up voluntarily to receive information on vacancies through a dedicated website
  - Providing employers with advertising and shortlisting assistance, resulting in a 'pool' of school leaver candidates selected by CAI for employers to choose from
- CAI has ongoing relationships with many employers and can help to identify what type of Apprenticeship would best suit their business
- Entry requirements vary greatly from post to post and a wide variety of occupational types are on offer, including non-traditional areas such as dentistry, life sciences and financial, increasing the range of young people who may be interested in or able to apply for an opportunity
- CAI is not limited to opportunities within the Modern Apprenticeship frameworks, and has included innovative programmes such as a Cooperage apprenticeship which provides an industry recognised qualification
- CAI extends its eligibility limit for looked after young people or young parents to widen access
- CAI works with young people to identify whether an opportunity is right for them, including taking into account their need for income and costs of travel
  - This personal support creates a situation where it is not feasible for CAI to shortlist applicants with no knowledge of their name or other identifying features, which is a standard way of eliminating bias in the shortlisting procedure
- Around 5.8% of CAI registered school leavers identified themselves as coming from a BME background; CAI's analysis of this is that if around 50% of school leavers are signing up and around 12% of Glasgow's population are thought to be from a BME background, this is fairly representative; furthermore the gender breakdown of this shows similar results to ethnic

majority young people (around 1/3 of those registered are female in both cases)

- Overall, around 20% of those registering are getting apprenticeships, yet this is only 8.5% for BME young people who register. The majority of these go to unknown destinations but decisions to go back to school for S5/6 or to enter further or higher education are thought to play a part
- Better tracking of destinations would improve knowledge about why fewer Apprenticeships on average go to BME young people
- The relative (un)attractiveness of Apprenticeships to BME young people and their parents may be a factor – reaching out to parents is difficult as engagement is through schools
- CAI is funded on a yearly basis and hopes to continue for the foreseeable future, especially given the increased focus on Modern Apprenticeships during recession

## Question and answer / discussion sessions

Two question and answer / discussion sessions were held during the event. Some of the main points raised included:

- The extent to which BME led businesses are engaged in delivery of Modern Apprenticeships is not known. Targeted engagement with these businesses could be highly beneficial both for potential Apprentices and for industry, as skills gaps are increasing due to changing patterns of migration and immigration regulations. Local associations and community groups of BME people are potential points of contact for engaging business owners.
- The standard public relations approach of organisations such as SDS using mainstream media means that their reach is not as wide as it could be – wider use of community media in some BME communities means that these outlets are sometimes a more valuable way to publicise initiatives such as Modern Apprenticeships. Identifying these media outlets should be relatively easy, for example all newspapers/magazines will have registered offices.
- Engaging with any individual or community will only work if information is targeted in a way that will be seen by them. In some cases, posters or advertisements in local shops and other neighbourhood facilities could be most effective.
- There has been considerable difficulty to date in engaging with potential or existing apprentices from BME communities to establish what works to increase representation. The actions being taken by organisations such as Trade Unions to promote wider participation (for example ASLEF's work with Scotrail following their flagship apprenticeship drive) could take a long time to embed and the results may be difficult to measure, however efforts must continue. Scottish Union Learning's Modern Apprenticeship Project had begun to make inroads but the short term nature of the project meant that the work could not continue consistently.
- Issues of occupational segregation and lack of access to opportunities for BME people are extremely long standing and entrenched. To date, awareness raising approaches have failed to resolve these issues, and people begin to disengage when efforts made so far are not seen to make a real difference.
- Practical approaches such as having a single website where Modern Apprenticeship vacancies can be advertised could help with accessibility. The structure of the Scottish system for arranging Modern Apprenticeships has not been ideal for arranging something like this, as opposed to the system in England and Wales, however it is something that SDS are looking into. Success of this would depend on employers' willingness to use it. In Glasgow, the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative makes use of such a system and could provide an example to build on.
- Modern Apprenticeships are often seen as a good alternative to higher education; although it is difficult to draw comparisons, the potential to reach an experienced wage rate faster may be an advantage for some. However, how long people stay with an employer once they have completed their Apprenticeship and what happens to their wage rate at that time is unknown (although they would become

entitled to at least the standard National Minimum Wage [NMW] for their age group when eligibility for the Apprenticeship Rate of NMW ends).

- There may be an argument for more pro-active measures to ensure that those young people furthest away from the labour market are able to compete for Apprenticeship opportunities; many of these opportunities have entry requirements which are difficult to meet. There are some examples of good practice in this area from larger employers/providers, for example partnerships with the Princes Trust to ring fence a number of places for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The sharing of good practice such as that outlined by the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative with others involved in Apprenticeship promotion and provision would be welcome
- The importance of matching evidence from equality monitoring to effective strategies for engagement, accessibility and widening participation was raised
- Schools have a role to play in encouraging young people to consider Modern Apprenticeships, however this will only be successful where the relationship between schools and young people is positive and builds aspirations



# Recommendations

- Skills Development Scotland should continue its positive approach to increasing participation of under-represented groups by publishing a progress report relating to the Equality Impact Assessment of the National Training Programmes carried out in 2010, detailing the actions taken, any difference made to participation rates so far, and any further actions which have been identified over the intervening years
- Continuing efforts should be made by Skills Development Scotland and individual Sector Skills Councils to engage with BME young people and wider BME communities through targeted communication with schools, community groups and local businesses
- Work should be commissioned to map Sector Skills Councils' approaches to widening participation in Modern Apprenticeships, including good practice sharing and recommendations
- Appropriate interventions to minimise the impact of racism in the workplace and labour market should be developed in relation to Modern Apprenticeship engagement activities, for example:
  - Addressing the issue of 'word of mouth' recruitment and its attendant biases
  - Learning from the experience of the Commonwealth Apprenticeship Initiative in providing advertising and shortlisting assistance for employers
  - Providing strong guidance to employers on their equalities responsibilities (in conjunction with Sector Skills Councils)
- Providers of careers advice (and other services supporting young people to make informed choices about transitions from school) should be sensitive to the additional concerns faced by many young BME people (i.e. lack of access to wider informal business contacts/networks and justifiable apprehension about the impact of racism in employment and the labour market); efforts should be made to mitigate these by offering extra support where needed
- Good practice in engaging, recruiting and supporting BME Modern Apprentices should be shared and rolled out as widely as possible, but only where this has made a demonstrable difference to ability to participate (concerns raised around perceived ineffectiveness of many 'awareness raising' activities and potential for poor practice, even when well-intended, to discourage engagement)

# Appendix: SDS Equality Impact Assessment

## Edited overview of recommendations relating to race equality in Skills Development Scotland's National Training Programmes Equality Impact Assessment and Action Plan, 2010

- Develop and communicate case studies to highlight opportunities to under-represented (race, gender and disability) groups through appropriate media
- Develop news stories, features and articles for publications which target under-represented (race, gender and disability) groups
- Establish partnership agreements with organisations who have an influence on equality groups re: communicating the value of the National Training Programmes (NTPs) (Young Scot, Local Authorities and schools – but others will be identified and developed)
- Attendance at a variety of events to highlight SDS services and programmes and engage with clients directly on the benefits of participation, also in the form of sponsorship if appropriate (past examples include the Mela festival in Glasgow)
- Disseminate and embed equal opportunities best practice in NTPs recruitment and delivery procedures by building capacity of training/ learning providers and developing infrastructural support; develop an equal opportunities toolkit and notice board on SDS website, plus development and delivery of equalities workshops for providers in each SDS region
- Equalities to be a standing item at provider forum meetings
- Build capacity of SDS frontline staff to better understand barriers and encourage widening of participation by under-represented groups; develop and cascade standard presentation to operations teams and establish a series of visits by frontline staff to local and national providers
- Effective engagement with employers to encourage buy in to the equalities agenda; develop the employer offer to promote buy in; engage with skill sector councils to develop strategy to encourage participation from under-represented groups
- Work with providers through Quality Development Plan to embed equal opportunities best practice and plan to raise participation rates from under-represented groups
- Explore establishing a short programme of pre MA tasters to enable individuals from under-represented groups to sample occupational areas
- Investigate the efficacy of introducing a mentoring programme for under-represented groups on NTPs
- Explore how to incentivise providers to encourage them to broaden participation from under-represented groups
- Undertake a review of the operating rules to ensure programmes encourage participation from under-represented groups

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