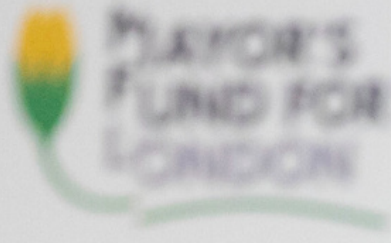


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# A BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE: EVALUATION OF THE FIRM FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN

MARCH 2024

**MAYOR'S FUND  
FOR LONDON**

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**Partnership  
for Young  
London**

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# FOREWORD

**Susannah Behr**  
Head of Programmes,  
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The Firm Foundations campaign was a real collaboration between the Mayor's Fund for London and the coalition of Built Environment employers who wanted to tackle diversity challenges within their sector. Founding Partners of the campaign recognised they needed to do more and were committed to driving change, understanding that they couldn't do it alone. The Diversity Pledge was used to encourage others across the sector to look within their own organisations and to identify actions they could take to make their businesses more inclusive to new young talent.

For all businesses looking to attract diverse talent, it is crucial that they find authentic, sustainable ways of making their recruitment and workplaces accessible and open to all. Too many young Londoners from low-income backgrounds and underserved communities do not have the social and professional connections to find the opportunities for which they would be so well suited. They are missing out. Businesses are missing out.

The Mayor's Fund for London is well placed to convene campaigns like Firm Foundations which created spaces for inclusive conversations between employers who want to be better, and enthusiastic students who want to progress. The evaluation highlights how successful the learning events were for doing just that. They became a focal point for the campaign, engaging students and career leads from our Access Aspiration programme, which supports a network of 50 schools with high levels of free school meals and care-experienced children.



Over the course of the campaign we have seen how all partners - employers, schools and young people - have benefitted, and learned how we could mitigate some of the challenges they met along the way.

Whilst the campaign was championed by and for the Built Environment, these challenges are not sector specific of course. The campaign has been an innovative part of a much bigger programme of activities and efforts across the Mayor's Fund for London and our partners and we will be taking the lessons learned back into our established employability programmes.

It was important to us that this was a youth-led evaluation, providing us with a moment of reflection at the end of the campaign, and before we take the next step. The evaluation being developed by young people provides a genuine insight into the effectiveness of an employer campaign. We are grateful to the team of young researchers at Partnership for Young London for their analysis and to all the contributors who shared their thoughts.

We know there is no limit to the ambition and appetite of young Londoners looking to take their next steps in their careers and lives. We are excited to see what comes next for the Founding and Supporting Partners who we hope will continue to model best practice for the sector, and for all the young professionals who shared their stories, who will one day soon be business leaders themselves.

## INTRODUCTION

The Mayor's Fund for London (MFL) launched the Firm Foundations Campaign with a vision to remove the barriers that young Londoners from low income backgrounds face as they set out to build meaningful and fulfilling careers.

By building a powerful alliance of Built Environment (BE) businesses to join the campaign, MFL sought to drive tangible changes in those employers' outreach, recruitment and progression practices. Using the campaign as a vehicle to help employers in London to develop a more diverse staff base and create inclusive working cultures which in turn would provide sustainable business benefits.

The following report highlights the successes and challenges of the Firm Foundations Campaign, and was conducted by a diverse group of young researchers employed by Partnership for Young London.

In trying to understand the impacts of the Firm Foundations Campaign, a qualitative approach was adopted, gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences it had on young people, young professionals and employers. Transcripts were then analysed by the young researchers to find commonalities between interviews. Case studies were developed through semi-structured interviews. Recommendations were created to encourage other organisations to review and adjust their practices to drive industry-wide change in the BE sector.

The Firm Foundations Campaign successfully met the objective of connecting businesses in the BE to a more diverse prospective workforce. The researchers are hopeful for the long term impact this campaign can have as a blueprint for more diverse representation in this and other sectors.



## ABOUT THE MAYOR'S FUND FOR LONDON



The Mayor's Fund for London was established in 2008 and champions opportunities for young Londoners from low income backgrounds and diverse communities across the capital. They are a politically independent, pan-London charity and the Mayor of London is their Patron. Last year they supported over 35,000 young Londoners with food and wellbeing provision, employability, skills development and enterprise opportunities. The charity works with 4-24 year olds in community and education settings, with 82% of young Londoners impacted coming from Black, Asian and minoritised communities.

### **Strategic priorities:**

The charity's mission is to ensure that all Londoners have:

- Opportunities to experience high quality engagement with the world of work.
- Access to activities and nutritious food in every school holiday.

MFL wants to ensure that young Londoners facing the biggest barriers aren't left behind in the school holidays, that they are able to grow up healthy and engaged, and have as many opportunities as their peers to build skills and careers for London's future economy.

Through their work with employers and partners, MFL want London to become a city that really values, invests and inspires young people, and which supports those facing the biggest barriers to thrive.

MFL convene and work in partnership with communities, employers, charities and the GLA to:

- Provide direct support to young Londoners who need it most (aged 4 to 24) through their network of community and educational settings.
- Focus delivery on providing essential skills for careers and essential access to holiday food and wellbeing activities.
- Create platforms for young people to shape, change and influence decision-making in London.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRM FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN

In October 2021, MFL launched the Firm Foundations Campaign with employers from across the BE working in fields like architecture, construction, property development, PR and design. Employers had recognised a lack of diversity, as exemplified by the statistics shared on page 7, across their workforces and wanted to make a formal commitment to do more to encourage and support a diverse, young workforce coming into the sector.

The campaign launched on 14 October 2021, with an online speaker and panel session to discuss issues around what needs to be done to achieve positive and lasting industry-wide change. From then on, learning events were held to engage employers and young professionals.

Organisations signed a pledge commitment to tackle inequality in their businesses and proactively offer in-work opportunities to young Londoners who might not otherwise have access to them. Working with MFL's Access Aspiration schools network (schools with above average pupil premium levels) supported this. The closing campaign event was held at City Hall on 18 October 2023.

## WHY WAS A BE CAMPAIGN NEEDED?

Young Londoners from low-income backgrounds faced an uphill battle in accessing employment opportunities. Figures indicated that only 17% of London's professional jobs were occupied by people from lower income backgrounds compared to 30% nationally.

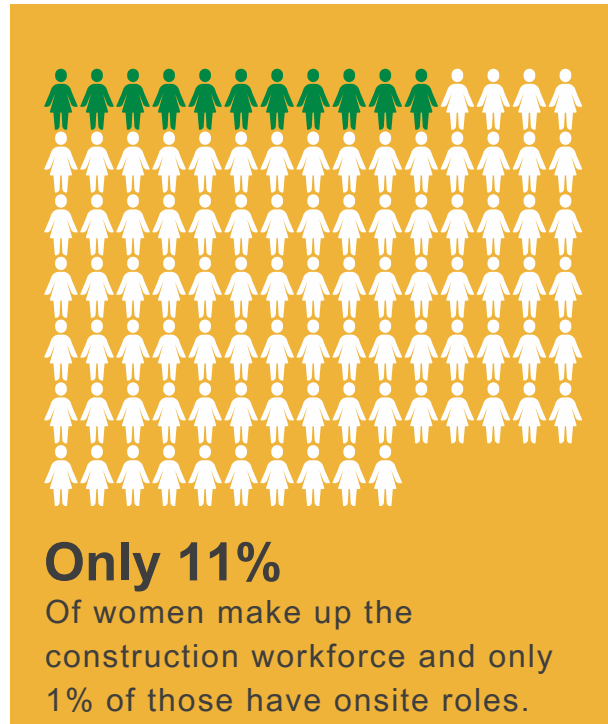
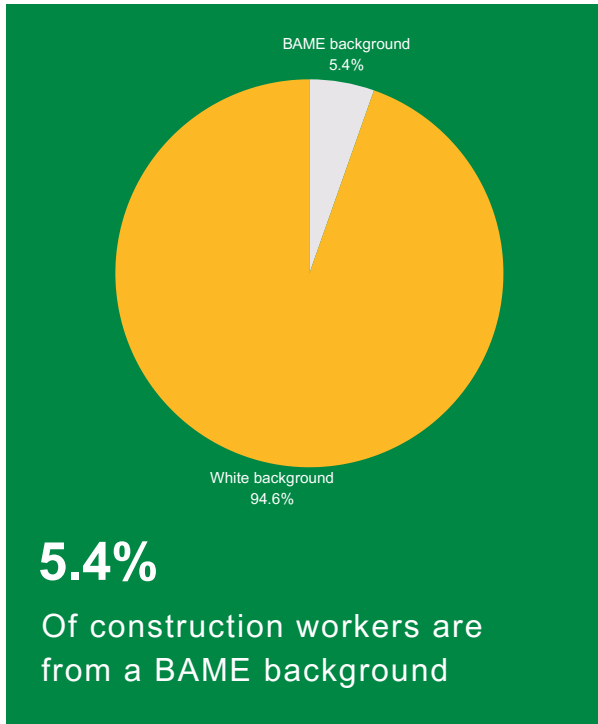
COVID-19 and the subsequent cost of living crisis had exacerbated existing inequalities. Young people from low socio-economic backgrounds were being affected the most, either by having lost their jobs or having had hours cut. Those from minoritised ethnic groups were twice as likely to have lost their job over the course of the pandemic having a clear economic effect. Many industries were facing an increasing skills shortage and employers had raised the difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified staff.

By transforming recruitment practices and drawing in people from a wider cross-section of the population, MFL could deliver tangible benefits to both business and society through the campaign.

MFL's mission was to help transform the lives of 120,000 young Londoners by 2025. The Diversity Pledge was just one way in which employers across the capital could commit to making this a reality by creating more Inclusive and progressive pathways into employment.

## SECTOR SNAP SHOT

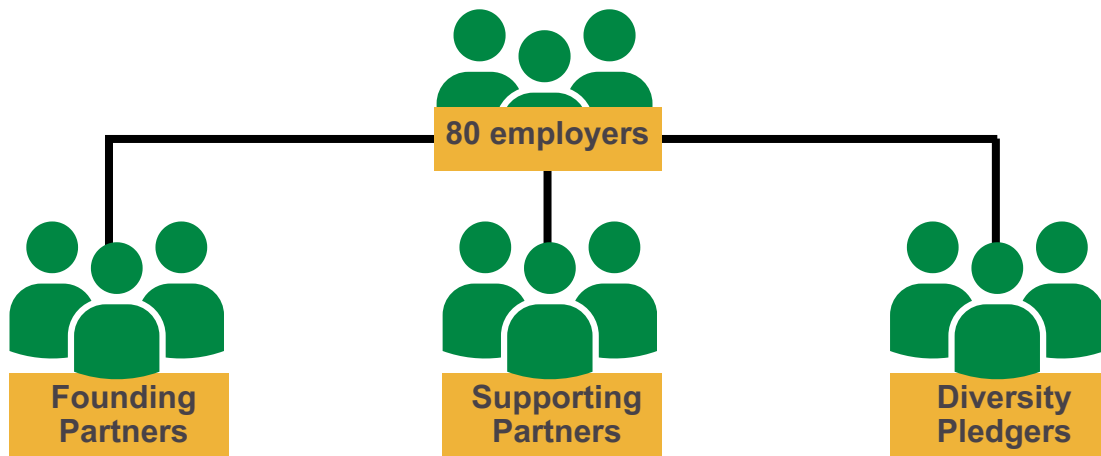
Whilst the diversity challenges differ across the sector between construction and architecture, design, or property development, the statistics below highlight the diversity challenges specifically in construction and real estate.



## MEMBERSHIP OF THE FIRM FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN

A total of 80 BE employers engaged in the campaign drawn from large corporates, public bodies and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Campaign members were invited to events, and received email communications sharing knowledge and case studies on progress being made in individual organisations.

There were three types of memberships available for businesses: Founding Partners, Supporting Partners and Diversity Pledgers. All members were asked to make a pledge and six months after signing up to their pledge, they were asked to report back on their progress. MFL coordinated and convened the campaign but members were responsible for holding themselves to account in delivering their pledges.



Founding Partners were reputable names in the BE sector, recruited to work alongside MFL to plan and deliver an effective campaign. A membership fee was paid to fund campaign activities. They were asked to make a pledge to change to one thing in their practice which would drive a more diverse young workforce coming in to their business.

Supporting Partners paid a lower membership fee to reflect their lower annual turnover but ensure the campaign engaged smaller businesses to join. They supported campaign planning and delivery. They were asked to make a pledge to change to one thing in their practice, which would drive a more diverse workforce coming into their business.

Diversity Pledgers were all other BE organisations who joined the campaign by making a pledge to change to one thing in their practice which would drive a more diverse young workforce coming in to their business.



# FIRM FOUNDATIONS CAMPAIGN: 2021 - 2023



## YEAR 1

- Focus of the first year of the campaign was to have businesses commit to the campaign whilst also hosting a series of B2B learning events to encourage other employers to join the campaign.
- A series of four learning events were held to engage BE businesses in the campaign. Themes of the events included the Power of Work Experience and Reverse Mentoring.

### SEPTEMBER 2021

- The campaign was soft-launched to raise awareness amongst the BE sector.

### OCTOBER 2021

- MFL hosted a launch event at City Hall, with over 160 senior leaders and practitioners in attendance encouraging employers to participate in the initiative.
- The campaign was backed by the Mayor of London.
- The Diversity Pledge was launched.

## YEAR 2

- After solidifying the roles and relationship with the businesses who were engaged in the campaign, Year two focused on bringing together the BE employer network and 16-18 year old students from MFL's Access Aspirations schools network.
- A series of learning events hosted by Founding Partners invited sixth form students into their businesses to excite and inspire them in a future career in the BE sector. Involving young professionals from Founding Partners in these events was important as relatable role models to young people attending.

### OCTOBER 2022

- MFL hosted a celebration event at City Hall to mark the one year campaign anniversary and the 10th anniversary of MFL's flagship employability programme, Access Aspiration.

### OCTOBER 2023

- MFL hosted an event at City Hall to mark the end of the campaign and reflect on the Impact of the campaign on the BE employers and young people who participated.

# EVALUATION PROCESS

At the end of the two year campaign, MFL commissioned Partnership for Young London, an infrastructural youth organisation that focuses on peer research, to evaluate the campaign.

The peer research team was composed of four young people who created and led on the evaluating process. It was vital that this piece of work was to be youth-led, aligning with MFL's ethos to involve young people in all aspects of programme development and evaluation.

The aim was to evaluate the impact and efficacy of the Firm Foundations campaign by identifying successes, improvements, and highlighting key learnings not just for the BE sector but for all employers seeking to diversify their young workforces.

A qualitative approach was employed to allow the researchers to explore the experiences of stakeholders in-depth. When designing the evaluation, three distinct stakeholders emerged that interacted with the campaign at various capacities.

These groups were:

- **Young BE Professionals** - employed by Founding/Supporting Partners who were currently in early BE career roles.
- **Secondary Schools** - teachers and sixth form students (aged 16-18) from MFL's Access Aspirations school network, who had attended a campaign learning event.
- **BE Employers** - Founding/Supporting Partners and Diversity Pledgers.



It was important to capture the views of the campaign for these various audiences in order to show the impact of the work.

All researchers attended training sessions that focused on developing research questions as well as interview skills. The group created an interview guide that was used in the data collection stage.

Researchers decided to use semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection as it allowed participants a platform to provide insightful responses without being restricted to a set few questions. It also allowed the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. More so, the ability to probe interviewees outside of the interview guide allowed for a rapport to be built with subjects and led to a comprehensive dataset.

The interview guide was segmented by stakeholders and had 12 questions in each section. A few of the questions were repeated across all the groups, whilst also having some specific ones tailored to their role and involvement in the campaign.

Following the completion of the interview guide, the data collection stage was launched. All interviews were held online and transcribed after completion. A total of 10 interviews were completed with four BE Employers, two Secondary Schools and four Young BE Professionals.

# CASE STUDIES

Key insights and learnings





## CASE STUDY 1

25-year-old young apprentice based at a leading trades company that represented the real estate industry in the UK. They had the opportunity to take part in the campaign in various ways, including being a part of a discussion panel at an event.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall the young professional was satisfied with their overall experience with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Improved interpersonal and public speaking skills
- Helping others coming up to learn from my experiences

#### CHALLENGES

- Campaign did not explicitly impact their career options
- Intimidating setting for young people e.g., “prestigious” location, dress code etc

**“THERE WAS A LOT OF STUDENTS WHO REACHED OUT...WANTING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE APPRENTICESHIP STORY AND MY JOURNEY”**

A success of the campaign was the opportunity to share experiences and support others in a similar position. The events in the campaign enabled attendees to receive real insights and direct advice from young professionals who were once in a similar position when applying for apprenticeships.

**“I THINK I FOUND OVER THE YEARS DURING MANY DIFFERENT PUBLIC SPEAKING EVENTS, SUCH AS MAYOR’S FUND FOR LONDON CAMPAIGN, THERE IS A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT”**

A success for this young professional was the development of their public speaking skills. They were invited to speak on many panels, and naturally saw personal improvement over time as well as other opportunities outside of the campaign as it **“led to other panel discussions”**.

**“THERE’S A BIG GAP BETWEEN LIFE EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN OUR SENIOR LEADERS IN THE INDUSTRY AND THOSE FROM DIVERSE LOW ECONOMIC SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS”**

They believed organisations should be the ones to hold responsibility to bridge the gap, especially if young people from underrepresented backgrounds had limited knowledge or experiences going into junior roles. They sighted reverse mentoring as a way to bridge the gap: **“Reverse mentoring is is a way that I think that that can help.”**

**“I WOULD HAVE FELT LIKE THAT EVENT’S NOT FOR ME BECAUSE IT’S SUCH A PRESTIGIOUS PLACE”**

They reflected on the corporate environment which could feel very uncomfortable when they imagined themselves in the shoes of young people who were just starting to navigate their options by taking part in the campaign. Having a mixture of informal drop in sessions as well as more formal ones, could have helped elevate the feeling of anxiety. Also communicating details such as dress code and roles could have had a positive impact.



## CASE STUDY 2

25-year-old young professional, worked in Communications for a Founding Partner organisation. They were on a number of panels for employers and young people whilst also was a mentor for another young person who worked at the company through the campaign.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall the young person was quite satisfied with their overall experience with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Strengthened industry knowledge
- Improved leadership & public speaking skills

#### CHALLENGES

- Received information second-hand and missed information at certain points.
- Worked in a small organisation therefore support services were limited

**“WE’RE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PUSH FORWARD. IT IS LOTS OF LITTLE THINGS AND EVERYBODY SHOULD BE DOING SOMETHING SMALL RATHER THAN ONE BIG THING”**

Whilst it was too early to comment on long lasting impact of the campaign, it was clearly evident that it created the conversation needed to continue building on this work to eventually lead to more substantial long-term impact.

**“THERE’S A LOT OF CAMPAIGNS OUT THERE FOR GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO CERTAIN INDUSTRIES BUT THE BE IS NOT ONE THAT WE SEE PUSHED, ESPECIALLY AMONG AUDIENCES THAT DON’T HAVE EXPOSURE TO INDUSTRIES LIKE THE BE”**

Their experience highlighted how vast the opportunities in the Built Environment were, but they were not being displayed as widely as they should have been. They expressed the need for campaigns such as the Firm Foundations one and also commended MFL for bridging that gap and **“telling the story better.”** By bringing more visibility to the opportunities, it would be easier to have a more diverse workforce.

**“IT’S DEFINITELY OPENED UP THE DOOR FOR ME IN UNDERSTANDING MY PATH INTO THE INDUSTRY”**

Engaging in MFL's campaign allowed them to discover their place in the industry, explore various paths into the field, and find ways to advocate for diversity, equality, and support for young people. They also shared that the success of the campaign was that it was a good opportunity for young people to see the multitude of BE pathways, consider apprenticeship opportunities and engage with employers.

**“WE SHOULDN’T BE WORKING IN SILOS WHEN IT COMES TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY...WE SHOULD BE REACHING OUT TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND HELPING TO LIFT OTHER PEOPLE UP AND BRING PEOPLE ALONG”**

An improvement suggested was increased cooperation between organisations in order to maintain and encourage diversity and inclusion in the industry. They expressed how it could motivate, support and push people to create change. They stated that **“working together is key”** and **“it's about collaboration across the industry about what people are already doing and what others could be doing.”**



### CASE STUDY 3

22 year old BE professional who was also a participant in MFL’s Access Aspiration employability programme at sixth form, which led her to her current career path.

#### AT A GLANCE

Overall the young professional was **very satisfied** with their experience of the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Got a paid internship as a result of participating
- Connected with young people

#### CHALLENGES

- Finding paid work experience opportunities to enhance career opportunities whilst paying the bills

**“ONE OF MY BIGGEST TAKEAWAY IS JUST BEING MORE COMFORTABLE SPEAKING IN PUBLIC”**

A personal success from the Firm Foundations Campaign was speaking and networking with young people and adults alike which helped to expand the reach of this campaign while developing the soft skills that were essential to personal development as well as future employment prospects. Networking was also helpful as it allowed them to **“get to understand where some of the employers are coming from”**. Having that insight had a positive impact on their overall experience.

**“BIGGEST TAKEAWAY IS HAVING FORMED QUITE A FEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY”**

Another success included making meaningful connections with others in the same sector as themselves. This sense of community was important as **“sometimes it's nicer to hear someone closer to where you're at compared to people that have been in the industry for ages just to have an idea of what it's gonna look like.”** Hearing experiences of those from similar backgrounds could be inspiring.

**“I DON'T HAVE ANY FAMILY BACKGROUND IN PROPERTY SO IT REALLY IT WAS VERY MUCH ACCESS ASPIRATION THAT GOT ME IN THE DOOR”**

The insight days, work experience and connections that were built throughout the young professional’s experience with the campaign has been influential in helping to determine next steps such as becoming more aware of opportunities in the BE and narrowing down university options.

**“I CAN'T TAKE THE SUMMER OFF TO DO AN INTERNSHIP IF IT'S NOT PAID LIKE IT WOULD BE MORE FEASIBLE TO JUST GET A PART TIME JOB DURING THAT TIME”**

The young professional expressed difficulty in finding any paid work experience which would be able to both support them career wise and financially in terms of paying rent and food while at university. So whilst there were work experience opportunities offered, it was not the most affordable for young people, especially if businesses wanted to employ from diverse working classes. This would be important for employers in the BE to know and what could be further addressed if the campaign was to be redelivered.



## CASE STUDY 4

27 year old who became a brand ambassador for the Firm Foundations Campaign who currently worked in the BE sector. They co-chaired events, participated in panels and was a keynote speaker. They were looking to develop BE business connections through the campaign because they lacked a role model who looked like them to look up to.

**“I DIDN'T REALLY NECESSARILY HAVE A ROLE MODEL OR ANYONE THAT I COULD LOOK UP TO”**

The young professional joined the campaign due to not having a role model figure in the BE. They also highlighted that many young people were currently in a similar situation where they did not know enough about the industry and the people inside, This supported the need to have campaigns such as the Firm Foundations Campaign to allow the community to expand and develop.

**“I DEVELOPED A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW COMPANIES WORK AND WHAT THEIR STRUGGLES WERE. AS WELL AS DAY-TO-DAY PEOPLE THAT ARE TRYING TO GET INTO THE INDUSTRY”**

They reflected on the invaluable conversations they were able to have which stemmed from asking questions, listening directly to employers and taking part in panels; The campaign went beyond just sharing a surface level view of the BE sector, allowing for young professionals to develop a deeper understanding of the opportunities available for themselves, but also understanding the needs of those looking to enter the sector.

**“I'D NEVER DONE A KEYNOTE SPEECH FOR 200 YOUNG PEOPLE”**

As a result of the panel discussions, a keynote speaker opportunity was given to this young professional. There was always something exciting and different to get involved with. The ability to speak to over **“200 young people”** emphasised the range of influence she could have on other like-minded young people who wanted to climb the corporate ladder. The personal development of skills was also noted by the young professional, in particular public speaking being an attractive transferrable skill to help young people navigate any industry.

## AT A GLANCE

Overall the young person was **quite satisfied** with their overall experience with the campaign

### SUCCESSSES

- Gained a professional network
- Developed public speaking skills

### CHALLENGES

- More time would be needed in order to bring about meaningful change in the industry regarding diversity

**“YOU HAVE TO WAIT A COUPLE GENERATIONS FOR THE DIVERSITY TO GET TO THE HIGHER LEVEL”**

They expressed her opinion on the trajectory for diversity and inclusion in the BE, implying the arduous journey required to become fully inclusive. The young professional reflected on the current experience with companies hiring more young people, who are not placed in senior positions, rather at a **“midsection”** level. They highlighted the importance of diversity of executive roles and how the current campaign would help diversity across all levels of the organisation in the future.



## CASE STUDY 5

18-year-old student who participated in the Power of Apprenticeships event, which was shared through their school due to personal interest in apprenticeships.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall the student was **quite satisfied** with their overall experience with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Reinforced the importance of networking
- Exposure into different pathways

#### CHALLENGES

- Students reliant on schools to provide information on the event
- Initial networking was quite daunting

**“THE EMPLOYERS THAT TALKED ABOUT ENGINEERING, THEY WERE ALL MEN.”**

Challenges around diversity of panellist was highlighted, The event could have represented more young females as they were usually just the apprentice representatives rather than the leaders and speakers for different companies. They referenced the career panel being led by men, a diverse range of panellists could improve the overall experience by making it more relatable. **“I feel like that would be really good just to have like a more of a role model.”**

**“WHEN I WAS SPEAKING TO PEOPLE, IT ALSO TOLD ME WHAT EMPLOYERS AND WHAT PEOPLE WERE LOOKING FOR IN YOU”.**

The student articulated the valuable advice that was gained during the event as a result of the presence of multiple employers who could hire the students in the future. The conversations were beneficial for their personal statement and application process for apprenticeships. **“When you're getting advice, it's not always from your teachers...It's from people you're actually**

**interested in.”** Beneficial insights were shared from employers with students such as herself which had not been available through school.

**“MY SCHOOL SAID IT WAS MORE FOR GENERAL APPRENTICESHIPS”**

A challenge that was highlighted by the young person was around the channels of communication. As MFL did not have direct communication with young people, the information was relayed through schools. In this instance, the school was not clear about the nature of the event being about the BE sector and so young people felt underprepared when they attended. However, once the student attended the event, they were able to find out more about the campaign through the MFL website: **‘I looked more into the website, it mentioned the built environment and it gave a list of all the different opportunities and the careers that would be there.’**

**“THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO GET INTO THE CAREER YOU LIKE.”**

The campaign did well in providing exposure to different pathways such as apprenticeships, that felt more inclusive to all students for those not looking to pursue further education. They were made aware of better opportunities to get into a chosen career as a result of the event. For instance, not having to go to university which required having high grades: **It's good to know that there's other ways.”**





## CASE STUDY 6

This teacher was a Personal Development Co-ordinator at a school based in East London and accompanied pupils to a learning event in February 2023.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall the teacher was **quite satisfied** with their overall experience with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Appreciated the direct exposure young people had with employers

#### CHALLENGES

- Working with other schools to further network and better communicate

**“IT’S VERY INTERESTING AND INSPIRING TO HEAR THE IMPACT OF JUST BEING MORE OPEN AND PROACTIVE”**

With the event encouraging open dialogue and forming new bonds and connections, this further helped the students work on soft skills and gain more than they initially thought. The students learnt that actively going out and speaking to people was the best way to gather information that they needed for success.

**“I THINK GIVING AN INSIGHT TO STUDENTS ABOUT WORK EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE CAREERS IS ESSENTIAL FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE THEY ARE SUCH A YOUNG AGE WHEN THEY TAKE SUCH IMPORTANT DECISIONS THAT SOMETIMES THEY FEEL LOST”**

The teacher articulated the importance of helping guide students when making important life decisions and this campaign was successful in promoting the importance of taking work experience opportunities. By bringing potential employers into the space with young people, it increased the likelihood of securing work experience opportunities, but also garnering knowledge about all the different roles available.

**“IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE, ESPECIALLY IF THEY COME FROM BARKING AND DAGENHAM, TO SEE ACUALLY I CAN GO TO LIVERPOOL STREET. I CAN GO TO SHOREDITCH AND WORK THERE”**

When discussing what could make this experience better, they highlighted the importance of being able to travel and see the organisations offices and environment. Making the financial capital of the country accessible to areas that faced the most social and financial deprivation would help to boost aspirations, learning to keeping their goals attainable and recognising that these spaces are for young people like them too.

**“IT WAS HELPFUL TO HAVE DIFFERENT INFORMATION ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP GOING ON...VERY GOOD IN TERMS OF GAINING INFORMATION AND THEN GIVE OUT THIS INFORMATION TO OUR STUDENTS”**

Another success of the campaign was that it was informative for the teachers as it allowed them to better understand what roles were available. They were then able to share this with other students at their schools and support them in making informed decisions.



## CASE STUDY 7

Employer at an communications focused business and joined the campaign because they noticed a lack of diversity in the sector. As a Founding Partner, their role included shaping the campaign and providing advice on communication from the very beginning of the campaigns conception.

**“A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW BUSINESSES LIKE US EXIST, AND IT'S SO INTERESTING.”**

The employer was aware of how little knowledge surrounded the BE, and the variety of career options that were available within it. They also mentioned that **“Teachers probably don't know what jobs exist out there”**. This illustrated the difference in knowledge between individuals and how this campaign was able to successfully bring groups together to demystify the BE.

**“I LEARNED HOW MUCH TALENT THERE IS UNTAPPED IN THESE YOUNG PEOPLE.”**

Another success of the campaign was that through these interactions between businesses and young people, they were able to get an in to the untapped potential of young people. **“I got to see their hopes and fears and their ambitions.”** By better understanding what young people needed from employers, the organisations could tailor their work experiences for them making it an overall better experience for all parties involved.

**“I THINK MF WERE PROBABLY A BIT TOO NICE AND THEY COULD BE BIT MORE DEMANDING”**

A challenge outlined by the employer was that there was not enough effort and accountability from the other partners. **“What was frustrating was just the inertia of so many of these founding members.. to actually be vocal, [or]do anything.”** To overcome this there could be specific tasks or activities to ensure full effort and participation from all employers. They also suggested holding more in person meetings and increasing networking opportunities between the Founding Partners to encourage everyone to be more actively involved

**“TEACH THE FIRM FOUNDATIONS MEMBERS HOW TO SPEAK TO THESE YOUNG PEOPLE”**

The employer believed that the campaign could be improved through training the businesses specifically around communicating with young people. For example sessions: **“on how to get the most for you as an employer out of the campaign like that and how to get the most out of these young people to help them”**.

## AT A GLANCE

Overall, the employer was **satisfied** with their experience with the campaign

### SUCCESSSES

- Exposure to young people from various backgrounds
- Reached a number of young people's and increased awareness of the sector.

### CHALLENGES

- Felt that there was unequal participation from businesses
- Realised that large corporations often lack the autonomy to make independent decisions.

**“TWO YEARS, THAT'S NOTHING. YOU'RE BARELY SCRATCHING THE SURFACE”**

Despite the campaign's strengths, the given timeframe was insufficient to bring about change at an intricate level. They emphasised the vastness of the built environment, highlighting the need for increased effort and consistency to attain the campaign's objectives. **“It needs to be something that's very much embedded in the Mayor's Fund because the built environment is huge.”**



## CASE STUDY 8

This employer worked for a trade association on their network of junior property professionals. As a Founding Partner, they helped facilitate events for the campaign by providing keynote speakers and members to attend networking sessions. They wanted to increase diversity and inclusion across the whole of the BE therefore was passionate about the initiative.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall, the Founding partner was **satisfied** with their experience with the campaign

### SUCCESSSES

- General networking as a built in part of the event
- Finding out there is an appetite for working in the BE among young people

### CHALLENGES

- Highlighted the need to widen engagement to include parents and careers

### “I’VE SPOKEN TO THOSE WHO DID PARTICIPATE AND THEY WERE REALLY HAPPY AND KEEN TO STAY INVOLVED”

The employer mentioned the positive feedback that was received throughout the campaign from both students as well as the industry professionals. This reinforced the benefits of such programmes which allowed for people to come together and hopefully influence change. The employer fortunately could bring members from their large network to some events. The different insights and journeys that could be exchanged proved successful.

### “IF THEY HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THESE BIG FIRMS, OR THEY DON’T KNOW WHAT A REGENERATION AND PLACEMAKING SCHEME IS, THEN HOW CAN THEY SUPPORT THEIR CHILD MOVING INTO THAT?”

In order to improve the campaign and its impact, the Founding Partner sites the importance of widening the engagement to family members. Parents are not always aware of opportunities in the BE therefore involving them in the campaign through various methods such as “**webinars**” would be very important as parents are usually in the decision making process with their child.

### “THERE’S AN INTEREST AND APPETITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE JOBS AVAILABLE”

The campaign showcased the curiosity of young people for the BE industry. They viewed organisations as having a responsibility to provide information to students regarding opportunities which would then be followed up. These initiatives could help young people to gain “**those soft skills**” which will be useful for entering the workforce.

### “HAVING SOME INFORMATION THAT WE CAN SIGNPOST THEM TO AHEAD OF THE EVENTS WOULD BE USEFUL”

The employer mentioned the opportunity for the campaign to have had even bigger reach. In particular, by having set communication assets such as “**texts that we could use before or after those events just to talk about it more widely.**” Having set resources to share would have also helped profile the campaign internally at the organisation as well as externally as the organisation had a newsletter that had high levels of engagement from those in the BE sector.



## CASE STUDY 9

An employer representing a surveying and design consultancy in the BE sector who joined the campaign as a Founding Partner, they believed it was a practice driven approach to address the diversity imbalance within their company and sector.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall the Founding Partner was **satisfied** with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Space to interact with young students
- Led to a visibly more diverse workforce in her organisation

#### CHALLENGES

- Limited involvement across their own organisation from Senior Leadership Teams

#### “I THINK PROBABLY THE CONNECTION WITH THE STUDENTS”

When asked about the biggest takeaway from the campaign, the employer sighted the connections created with the young students as the most important. It was an opportunity for them to not only showcase opportunities in the sector that were not that well known, but also get an understanding of what young people were looking for in terms of employment. They also sighted these events as the most significant stage of the overall campaign.

“WE’VE SHARED THE STORIES OF HAVING THE STUDENTS HERE ... WE’RE CERTAINLY MORE DIVERSE THAN WE LOOKED COMPARED TO BEFORE”

The employer highlighted the value of the student employer network that the Firm Foundations Campaign offered. With companies targeting demographics they wouldn’t otherwise via youth outreach, it had the potential to shift not only hiring capacity that were typically ‘White’ and ‘Male’ dominated, but also the mindset of job seekers, to where their perspective and experiences as a minority would be valued which was reflected in their recruitment process as **“we’re definitely seeing a wider range of people applying for roles with us now.”**

“BUT QUITE OFTEN BECAUSE IT WAS SO BUSY, I COULDN’T GET ANYONE TO COME WITH ME ...THERE WAS NOBODY THAT HAD ANY TIME”

A common challenge across the board was employers not providing a designated time for individuals who wanted to get involved in the Firm Foundations Campaign work. In reality, what was more often happening was there was one employee who was spending their time to work on the campaign. This meant that there was a limited impact and if there was not full company buy-in then long lasting impact might be harder to achieve. This could be overcome through MFL teams coming **“out to the businesses ... and present to the leadership team and say this is what we want to achieve and this is what we need from you”**. People further down in the corporate ladders could only act with the resources given to them by those higher up. While it was not imperative that Senior Leadership Teams had a directly active role, it highlighted the importance of MFL doing more to communicate the importance of their work to Senior Leadership Teams, to ensure company wide involvement .



## CASE STUDY 10

This employer worked with MFL leading their employability programmes. Their role focused on direct opportunities and engagement with young people and employers, with this campaign focused on integrating these opportunities with the BE sector.

### AT A GLANCE

Overall they were **very satisfied** with their overall experience with the campaign

#### SUCCESSSES

- Good to have direct contact and network with large employers
- Campaign addressed different routes into employment

#### CHALLENGES

- Sessions were overly long which impacted the level of engagement
- Dependency on good will of BE employers to create engaging learning events

**“IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN LEARN, IT'S WHAT THE INDUSTRY CAN LEARN FROM YOUNG PEOPLE.”**

They discussed the insights that the campaign gained from young people which would benefit the workforce. The sessions allowed young people to speak on ideas such as reverse mentoring. The employer also talked about these requests as a way for employers and future employees to listen to each other and create impactful change.

**“PART OF WHAT WE DO IS ABOUT INFLUENCING SOME SYSTEMIC CHANGE.”**

Identifying the need to make systematic changes was important when it comes to impact of the campaign. It also provided more context as the campaign aimed to make big changes, but would need every person across the organisation to work towards implementing changes to have an impact on a systematic level. Taking a sectoral approach allowed them to be targeted and really invest in building relationships.

**“IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT TALKING ABOUT THE SECTOR...IT'S ALSO DEMYSTIFYING WHAT EVERYBODY THINKS ABOUT BE.”**

The employer wanted the campaign to be able to address the common misconceptions about the BE being just about building things or construction jobs. For example, the employability programme (Access Aspiration) could shed light on the range of jobs in the industry from HR to Finance and Law. The multi-dimensional insights from the events were invaluable to students and young people.

**“I THINK ONE OF THE GOOD THINGS WAS THERE WAS ENGAGEMENT WITH SOME OF THE BIGGER EMPLOYERS...THROUGH TO QUITE SMALL ORGANISATIONS ”**

A success of the campaign was that they were diverse in the type of organisations they partnered with. By partnering with bigger organisations like Berkley not only were they able to tap into their abundant resources, but also having a familiar name amongst lesser known businesses could attract more younger people. By having a range of organisation sizes allowed for sectoral changes based on capacity and resources.

**“THE SESSIONS WERE TOO LONG...YOU NEED A CRITICAL MASS OF BOTH EMPLOYERS THERE AND YOUNG PEOPLE.”**

The event sessions being too long could have impacted engagement, going forward MFL mentioned they were looking to shorten their sessions by having less panels but still keeping the networking element as they received positive feedback regarding networking.

# KEY LEARNINGS

Based on the case studies shared and the wider dataset, presented below are the key learnings for those looking to understand how to create a more inclusive workforce, from the perspective of young people, schools and young professionals. Whilst recognising the challenges employers faced in trying to do so.

## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

**Subsidised opportunities:** Young people have expressed inability to participate in work experience as they miss out on paid work. Consider paid opportunities where possible, to enable young people to prioritise these valuable experiences. By having the opportunity to take part in work experience, young people will have the opportunity to explore career paths in less known sectors.

**Communicate expectations:** To alleviate anxiety related to unfamiliar surroundings, there should be improved communication regarding expectations, such as dress codes, roles of young people, key terms etc. This can be achieved through the distribution of informative emails.

**Cascaded/peer mentoring:** To guarantee that young people learn from the campaign, they can mentor their peers, passing on their knowledge and simultaneously honing their leadership skills.

## SCHOOLS

**Platforming different careers:** Schools and other organisations should actively work to ensure that they are platforming a diverse range of careers. This could be in the form of inviting those from less known sectors, such as the BE, to career fairs and assemblies.

**Teacher Training:** As teachers play a crucial role in guiding young people toward viable career options, they can serve as a link to address the knowledge gap. Providing organisations with resources or training about the different careers out there can address this.

**Prepare students before networking:** To ensure that students make the most of the events, consider holding school sessions to facilitate questions and provide guidance. This also involves discussing details such as dress codes.

## BUSINESSES

**Build on communication:** Consider refining networks to ensure seamless communication and connections, for example creation of alumni network for people who have attended events, or Whatsapp communities and/or newsletter to share updates.

**Businesses training sessions:** Ensure that businesses are also getting the most out of these opportunities by offering sessions that explore how to engage and effectively communicate with young people at career fairs.

**Reverse Mentoring:** Companies should participate in reverse mentoring to foster understanding of the concerns and experiences of young people, particularly those from lower socioeconomic and diverse backgrounds.

# CONCLUSION

Overall, the Mayor's Fund for London campaign was successful with the majority of the stakeholders being satisfied with their overall experiences. Our findings made very clear that the programme set the tone for clearly setting out a foundation for organisations to be more mindful of their diversity and inclusion practices.

The campaign set into motion the important conversation regarding the topic of inclusivity in the workplace and engaged employers into the role they could play in influencing systemic change. Many young people received exposure to the array of opportunities available in the BE which would not have not been possible if it were not for the campaign to shed light into the space.

The campaign bridged the gap between businesses and young people to not only demystify the BE but also identify the needs of young people entering the workforce. Every demographic regardless of their level of involvement during the campaign gained something whether it was confidence, networking, or valuable insights into the sector. The events have even opened the door for students and young professionals to attain work experience and internships as a result of the connections that had been created.

As we anticipate the lasting effects, the MFL campaign stands as a catalyst for positive change and a beacon of inspiration for future endeavours in promoting inclusivity and opportunities within the BE sector.



As key learnings were shared for the different stakeholders, below are the key learnings for MFL:

- The campaign was successful in showcasing not only the different roles available, but also the various routes to get into these roles. However, it was evident that there needs to be clearer lines of communication regarding the nature of the events when MFL was reliant on schools/teachers to cascade down this information to students. Creating clear information packs that are shared regularly with organisations can help share information.
- Young people reported that at times, communication felt impersonal and disrupted. Organisations should consider enhancing communication by consistently offering updates to all stakeholders before, during, and after events.
- There was a need to have more strict criteria and expectations of the employers joining so that everyone was contributing and having an impact on the campaign. MFL as a charity was convening the campaign employers network but participation employers was determined by the member organisations themselves. Changes in staff at member organisations saw commitment waiver at times without an in-house campaign champion.

# THANK YOU

MFL wish to thank all of the BE organisations who have supported the campaign. Organisations who have recognised a need to do more and do better to attract and nurture diverse young talent across London and publicly committed to take action.

The campaign may have ended but your role as Diversity Champions in the sector has not.





# THANK YOU

Particular thanks is extended to the campaign's Founding and Supporting Partners who were both the driving force for the campaign's origination and direction, whilst also driving change in their own businesses.

