



# FIRM FOUNDATIONS



## DIVERSITY PLEDGE

**CHAMPIONING A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE  
WORKFORCE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

## INTRODUCTION

Young Londoners from low income backgrounds face an uphill battle in accessing employment opportunities. Research shows that they are more likely to be unemployed compared to their peers. Figures indicate that only 17% of London's professional jobs are occupied by people from lower income backgrounds compared to 30% nationally<sup>1</sup>. The Built Environment is no exception. Only 27% of employees in real estate for example, are from lower socio-economic backgrounds<sup>2</sup>.

Covid-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities. Young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are being affected the most, either by having lost their jobs or having had hours cut. Those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups are twice as likely to have lost their job during this time<sup>3</sup>.

There is a huge cost to society and business if this situation continues to exist. The 'scarring effects' of unemployment impacting young people's future employability and wages are well documented. Recent events in the UK and the US have highlighted simmering racial tensions with many businesses taking a stand and embracing the need to be (come) diverse and inclusive.

This also has a clear economic effect. Many industries are already facing an increasing skills shortage and employers have raised the difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified staff.

It is safe to say that by transforming recruitment practices and drawing in people from a wider cross-section of the population, we can deliver tangible benefits to both business and society.

We believe that young Londoners, no matter their background, should have equal access to the outstanding opportunities this city has to offer. Our mission is to help transform the lives of 100,000 young Londoners by 2023.

Our Diversity Pledge is just one way in which employers in the Built Environment can commit to making this a reality by creating more inclusive and progressive pathways into employment.

### Aims

- To raise awareness of the practice that employers can engage in to increase diversity, narrow the skills gap and provide business benefits to London's employers.
- To build a powerful alliance of employers who sign up to the Pledge, acting as agents of positive change, and influencing London's social mobility agenda.

1 [https://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/One-City-Two-Worlds\\_Londons-social-mobility-puzzle-February-2020-spreads-.pdf](https://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/One-City-Two-Worlds_Londons-social-mobility-puzzle-February-2020-spreads-.pdf)

2 Bridge Group report "Socio-economic diversity in the real estate sector" September 2020

3 <https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/Generation%20COVID-19.pdf>

# OUR VISION

We aim to remove the barriers that young Londoners from low income backgrounds face as they set out to build meaningful careers. Transforming outreach, recruitment and progression practices will help employers in the Built Environment to develop a more diverse staff base, create inclusive working cultures and provide sustainable business benefits.





# CORE PRINCIPLES

Signatories of the Built Environment Diversity Pledge commit to championing three core principles:

## **1 Working in partnership to connect with schools & access broader talent pool**

Recruitment is expensive and companies are likely to incur additional costs when traditional recruitment approaches do not produce the desired results. Employers will engage closely with a wide range of employment support organisations and schools, allowing access to a broader talent pool.

## **2 Being clear and transparent on D&I goals and appointing champions**

Staff and partners will be aware of employers' commitment to diversity and inclusion. Existing recruitment methods and promotion of progression routes to be reviewed to ensure they are inclusive to all applicant groups. Appointing senior champions and encouraging peer to peer mentoring are powerful methods of embedding a commitment to diversity.

## **3 Acknowledging that short term investment creates long term benefit**

Providing access to structured work experience opportunities and/or quality apprenticeships are key methods of bringing new skills to business. Good practice has shown that the associated upfront costs are offset by the longer-term benefit to business.

## COMMITMENT

By signing up to the Diversity Pledge, employers agree to:

- Champion the Pledge principles.
- Implement at least one new action to help drive diversity and inclusion within 6 months of signing. We will not formally monitor commitments but will carry out annual reviews of activity throughout our Firm Foundations campaign. From time to time we will invite you to join us at events to share experiences and celebrate successes.
- Encourage relevant stakeholders to approach us in signing the Pledge. Through our Firm Foundations campaign, we are creating a network of BE employers that reflect London's vast range of industries and sectors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Creating a diverse workforce requires a range of activities. Based on our own experience and research, we have listed our recommendations below which also include opportunities to work together with us.

### I. Raising Aspirations

#### Collaborate with schools and community organisations

- 1 Employers to participate in opportunities to **raise awareness of their business** amongst young people in school and those who are looking for work. The aim is to create more visibility of employment pathways and skills requirements within your sector so that young people can make informed decisions about future careers.
- 2 Employers to provide **structured work experience** for students, to give young people insights into the industry. The work experience should be underpinned by a work plan and clear feedback mechanisms to ensure it is meaningful for all parties involved.
- 3 Opportunities to be provided for **staff to engage with young people** across London through the Mayor's Fund for London Access Aspiration programme, which supports 16–18 year olds who are making key decisions about future careers but struggling to make links with employers. Activities include career insights and a work experience coordination service.



## II. Inclusive Recruitment and Selection

### Explicit commitment to diversity

- 4 Employers to communicate their commitment to **building a diverse and inclusive talent pool** of candidates to:
  - Prospective applicants via job descriptions and/or job adverts.
  - All internal key stakeholders as well as any recruitment partners.
- 5 Employers to ensure that **all internal staff involved** in the recruitment process, from senior management to line managers, have **received appropriate training** and understand and support the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

### Inclusive attraction processes

- 6 Employers to **review job descriptions**, personnel specifications and job adverts to ensure:
  - Language and tone are not off-putting or offensive to any group.
  - Wording and imagery used in adverts is inclusive.
  - Where appropriate, the focus is on skill sets rather than qualifications and work experience to attract and capture the widest diverse talent. Remove or reduce the requirement for applicants to have a fixed number of years of experience, which automatically restricts the pool of people who meet your criteria and instead recruit for aptitude and attitude.
- 7 Employers to **promote vacancies through employment support organisations** that work with school/university leavers, unemployed people and experienced hires with the aim of increasing visibility of these opportunities to a wide and diverse candidate base.



## Inclusive selection processes

- 8 Where possible, employers to ensure that all **shortlists include at least one candidate from an under represented group**.
- 9 Employers to **diversify interview panels** to include at least one female member and/or a BAME panel member.
- 10 Employers to **provide constructive feedback** to all applicants who are unsuccessful at interview stage. This will serve to keep applicants engaged and not put them off applying for other opportunities with the same employer or others in the industry.

## III. Retention and Progression

- 11 Employers to **promote career pathways and onward opportunities** within their business to both prospective applicants and existing workforce.
- 12 Employers to **profile role models** from lower socio-economic, including those from BAME backgrounds, to encourage internal applications for more senior posts.
- 13 If possible, employers to identify and offer talented employees, from underrepresented groups, **access to a range of bespoke personal and professional development activities**. These do not need to be expensive and may include informal access to role models and mentors as well as more formal activities like coaches, sponsors and bespoke learning and development programmes.



## IV. Sharing Best Practice

- 14 Employers to **work collaboratively** for the greater good of their sector, for example if diverse and inclusive role models cannot be identified within an employer's own workforce, employers will establish a pool of role models for use across the sector.
- 15 The **Mayor's Fund for London to continue to facilitate best practice** sharing between employers and to promote collaboration with support organisations to help promote and increase diversity and inclusion within the capital's workforce.

## GET INVOLVED

By signing up to the Diversity Pledge, your organisation will feature on the Mayor's Fund for London website and social media channels. You will also be given opportunities to take part in our Firm Foundations campaign as well as our collaboration and promotion activity.

To sign up to the Diversity Pledge and support our campaign, please contact:

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