

Formal Inquiry into Race in the Construction Industry

Call for Evidence response form

**Do you provide training, education and/or careers advice about the construction industry?
If so, we would like to hear your views.**

In the first phase of our Inquiry, we are launching a Call for Evidence from people involved in or connected with the construction industry. We want to hear the real-life experiences and views of as many people as possible.

When we talk about ‘workers in the construction industry’, we mean anyone working in the industry. This includes trades, crafts and professions, and those in technical and administrative roles. ‘Workers’ are employees, self-employees and sub-contractors.

We are keen to gather evidence about:

- Barriers to the entry and retention of ethnic minority workers across all professions and trades in the construction industry.
- Examples of good practice in encouraging ethnic diversity in the construction industry.
- The impact of job losses in the construction industry on ethnic minority workers.

We would appreciate it if you could complete the form below and return it to us by 24th March 2009 (contact details are given at the end of the form).

**All your personal information will be kept confidential.
It will not be shared with any other organisation.**

Whether you contact us in writing or by phone, it would be helpful if you could answer the questions set out in the following form. If you need more space to respond to one or more questions, please use a separate sheet.

Section 1:

1. What is your own and your organisation's role?

The Construction Youth Trust aims to help young people into construction training and employment. Its focus is on supporting disadvantaged young people, and to remove barriers such as gender, ethnicity, financial aspiration, and understanding.

2. If you provide education or training courses relevant to the construction industry (whether leading to specific qualifications or not), please specify what they are.

If you do not provide education or training but provide careers advice, you may want to skip to question 6 below, though we would be interested in any views you feel you can give on questions 3 to 5.

Our Trust provides a range of programmes that support young people on their journey to work. This includes general awareness, bursaries, work placements, and employer brokerage. Our work focuses on both craft and professional roles. We also have programs that are focused on the homeless and offenders with a particular emphasis on brokering employment opportunities for them.

We recognise our strength at acting as broker between communities and the industry. Examples of our projects include:

- Budding Brunel – taster sessions of the industry for school-aged pupils looking to move into professional roles
- Capital Experience – Paid work experience for 6th Formers to enable them to understand the breadth of opportunity, roles and types of employer the sector offers
- Mobile classrooms – Providing a taste of the crafts based roles in the sector.

3. The proportion of workers from ethnic minority communities in the construction industry is only around 3.3%. Based on your experience, how does that proportion compare with:
- a) those applying for construction industry-related education or training with your organisation?
 - b) those completing construction industry-related education or training with your organisation?

We recognise that more ethnic minority individuals generally apply for training than enter the sector. Much of our work is based in East London, and by nature that work draws in large numbers of BMEs. Especially those looking to enter the professions.

Our BME participants generally complete at the same rate as the rest of our beneficiaries.

4. If there is a low take-up of education and training courses relating to the construction industry by students or trainees from ethnic minority communities, what are your views about why that is the case?

There is a lack of understanding of the opportunities within the sector at all levels, to such an extent that even professional roles are not valued by potential graduates.

The lack of understanding can be attributed to the need for better careers advice.

5. If there is a higher proportion of trainees or students from ethnic minority communities not completing construction industry-related courses, what are your views about why that is the case?

The routes to accessing work experience at craft and professional level are not obvious to educational institutions.

If construction in the UK accounts for 10% of GDP, then logic would suggest 10% of careers/business advice should focus on construction disciplines- this does not happen.

6. If you are involved in giving careers advice, what factors influence the advice you give about the construction industry to those seeking career advice?

(This is both advice given to those who are actively looking to work in the construction industry, and to those who do not have any fixed ideas about future careers but whose skills, knowledge or experiences may make a career in the construction industry an appropriate option for them.)

Ensuring that careers teaching is correct about the breadth of opportunities that sector offers now and in the future.

Factors included:

- The efforts by Construction Skills through initiatives such as the CSkills ambassadors
- The promotion of an inclusive and low barrier to entry sector; together with the willingness of the sector to enable people to grow up through the ranks.
- Involving employers in any guidance process to make the sector come alive and to be able to give pertinent and relevant advice about the sector that ensures that any guidance is demand-led.
- Earn as you learn schemes
- High quality careers materials focused at those aspiring craft and graduate levels
- The breadth of the sector and the breadth of opportunity it provides including roles such as lawyers, accountants and marketing executives

7. In your experience, how is the construction industry perceived by students and trainees from ethnic minority communities, and what factors influence that perception?

The construction industry has a negative image based upon the stereotype of a sector which only encompasses craft/manual trades, outdoor work and a white male only culture.

Factors that influence this perception can be found in :

- the lack of promotion of a positive image of the sector in popular culture e.g. television programmes not including characters in positive roles at all levels including senior engineers, project managers and quantity surveyors.
- aspirations of ethnic families and parental pressure to enter more 'traditional' professional careers like medicine and the law

8. In your experience, what do you think are the main factors which influence whether trainees or students from ethnic minority communities decide to follow a career in the construction industry?

Main Factors include:

- Careers advice
- Inspirational contact with an industry representative
- Work experience
- Advice from a respected figure who knows about the sector
- peer pressure

9. Are you aware of and/or have you been involved in any specific initiatives to encourage the take-up of construction-related training, jobs or careers in ethnic minority communities (for example, the ConstructionSkills Construction Ambassadors programme or the Positive Impact advertising campaign)? Please specify and tell us whether the initiative was successful, and, if so, why?

Some key programs of the Trust that support the drive are:

- Capital Experience programme; work experience programme for school students
- Budding Brunels; programme of industry presenters, site visits and careers advice for aspiring young school pupils
- Inspire Scholars; higher education scholarships

The above initiatives have proven to be successful for individuals aspiring to enter the professional employment routes in construction.

10. Finally, we would be interested in any general views that you have about the issues set out in the terms of reference of this inquiry. In particular, any views you have about the reason for the low proportion of ethnic minority workers in the construction industry and any steps that can be taken to address the underlying reasons for it.

We acknowledge there is an issue to be confronted when evidence clearly highlights that there is a low proportion of ethnic minority workers in the construction industry.

The Trust works with communities and employers, and believes that a sustained initiative promoting good practice and measured impact would make a substantial difference. We believe our programmes make a measurable impact in making an impact on encouraging BME students into the sector.

Are you willing to talk to us in more detail about these issues?

Yes

If you think it would be useful for us to meet with the people you advise or train please let us know.

You can send your response:

- by **email** to **raceandconstruction@equalityhumanrights.com**
- by **fax** to **0161 829 8499** (please mark faxes for the attention of Race and Construction Inquiry Team)
- by **post** to the following FREEPOST address:

Race and Construction Inquiry Team
Equality and Human Rights Commission
FREEPOST RRLG-GHUX-CTR
Arndale House
The Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3AQ

To give your response by telephone or textphone, please contact our helplines:

England
Telephone: 0845 604 6610
Textphone: 0845 604 6620

Wales
Telephone: 0845 604 8810
Textphone: 0845 604 8820

Section 2: Your contact details

We would be grateful if you could provide us with your name and contact details in case we need more information. Please be assured that we will treat this information confidentially.

If you wish to remain anonymous, please leave this section blank. However, we would appreciate it if you would complete Section 3 so we can make sure that we are reaching all of the groups that we need to.

Your name:

Christine Townley

Full postal address:

55 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QL

Telephone:

0207 227 4560

Mobile:

Email address:

Christine.Townley@cytrust.org.uk