

Moving On Up

Learning Report

Moving On Up (MOU) is a special initiative funded by Trust for London and City Bridge Trust, in partnership with the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG). The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) is undertaking a process and impact evaluation of the initiative.

The context for the initiative is the low employment rate among young black men in London relative to other ethnic groups, which is both longstanding and consistent over time. MOU aims both to directly increase the employment rate amongst young black men in London through supporting targeted interventions; and to generate learning that could influence mainstream employment support providers and funders/commissioners. Grants were awarded to six organisations: Action West London (formerly Action Acton), Elevation Networks, Hackney CVS, London Youth, Making the Leap and Step Ahead that use a range of different models to support young black men to transition successfully into employment. Work started in March 2015.

As of November 2016, approximately 223 of the 744 young black men who had been supported by the Initiative, had secured employment.

Profile of participants

- 93% of participating young men identify as Black (African, Caribbean, British) or Mixed (White and Black African or White and Black Caribbean).
- 12% of participants have Level 1 qualifications, 32% Level 2, and 25% Level 3.
- 28% of participants faced school exclusion, of which 8% permanently. These rates are substantially higher than among the same ethnic groups in the whole school population.
- Almost 63% of participants have done paid work (full or part time) before entering the programme.

Types of interventions

There are three intervention models across the six projects:

- Work brokering and support with job application skills;
- Providing direct access to work experience and employers; and
- Activities designed to raise aspiration and motivation or change attitudes.



The Learning So Far

- Young black men face more challenges than most jobseekers. They are more likely to have been excluded from school, lack key qualifications, live in low income households and to have a criminal record. They often lack the confidence and motivation to seek a job and the resilience to deal with the setbacks that all jobseekers encounter. They face negative stereotyping from the media and often from employers.
- There are no 'quick fixes'. Young black men need intensive and long term support to help them into employment. Many young black men lack a career focus or vision for what they could do. Many need support to help them develop ambition and a sense of direction.
- It has become difficult to get Jobcentre Plus referrals. All MoU projects have established links with JCP but because of changes in JCP structures, they have found that JCP is referring fewer young black men than on previous programmes.
- Early intervention is vital. The longer that young black men are on Job Seeker's Allowance the more difficult it is to retain their engagement on specialist support programmes like MoU.
- A personalised approach is key. The MoU projects are providing the time and space that young black men need to develop the confidence and mentality to look for a job. The MoU providers are delivering flexible, personalised services with staff taking the time to listen to and support clients.



Minister for Employment visiting the MoU

- Personal connection and empathy are important. In some MoU projects young black male advisers are supporting young black male clients. Their shared experience as young black men provides a close rapport which helps to retain and motivate clients. However, all MoU providers agree that the advisers' attitude and commitment are more important factors in building connections with clients than their age and ethnicity.
- A compelling offer can prevent early drop out. Retaining young black men on longer term programmes is very challenging. Compelling offers encourage retention. These can include an offer of 1:1 long term support, a guaranteed job interview or opportunities to visit leading companies.
- Engagement with employers is essential. Engaging employers is a challenge for providers. Providers themselves need support to build links with employers and get them involved in the MoU programme.
- Informal contact with employers can lead to job offers. This enables young black men to build relationships with employers without the pressure of formal recruitment processes, where many of them do very badly. Informal contact helps to develop the social capital which many young black men are lacking.

Key Insights

- Participants begin the programme with quite healthy attitudes to work and with high work aspirations.
- Young people assess themselves quite highly in practical skills in looking and applying for work.
- There is little change in participants' self-assessment of their "resilience" before and after the interventions.
- There are clearly limits to what quantitative data can clarify about the underlying challenges and the impact of the MOU initiative on young people. The projects themselves suggest that participants are often not good at judging their own work readiness and that the survey data may give an inaccurate picture of motivation. This apparent discrepancy requires further investigation as it has significant implications for the likely effectiveness of different delivery models.
- Projects express a diverse range of views on the many different kinds of challenges that the young black men with whom they work are facing. Several note that the problem of the relatively low employment rate of young black men needs to be understood in a wider system context, and that their ability to influence outcomes on their own can be limited.
- Projects stress that for many of the young people whom they support, what happens after a young person has transitioned into work is as important as that transition itself.
- Projects' ability to engage effectively with employers to support young people into work opportunities suffer in some cases from a lack of scale.



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Summary

Interim findings from analysis of participant survey data suggest that the participating young black men already have quite healthy attitudes to work and high work aspirations; and they assess themselves as having the resilience and practical skills required to find work. This is at odds with some of the assumptions underlying the intervention models. Findings from our semi-structured interviews with providers reveal that they believe that participants may over estimate their own work readiness and that survey data may give an inaccurate picture of motivation. It will be important to shed further light on this apparent discrepancy between young black men and practitioners' views, using qualitative information to supplement survey data.

Practitioners express a range of views on the primary challenges faced by young black men in transitioning successfully into the labour market. Some highlight the challenges and limitations associated with understanding and tackling the relatively low employment rate of young black men in London using ethnicity as a primary lens. Several note significant constraints in their ability to influence outcomes on their own and at a relatively late stage in young people's development. While the focus of the interventions is on pre-employment support, practitioners stress the importance role of support during and after transition into employment to increase the likelihood of sustained employment. The role of employers is recognised to be critical to tackling the underlying problem, though projects' own ability to engage effectively with employers to support young people into work opportunities suffer in some cases from a lack of scale and capability.

We recommend that the next phase should focus on:

- understanding more the mechanisms of interventions, Trust for London should perform this investigation working alongside grantees, and building a strong learning culture within the cohort
- capturing and using the experiences of young black men to improve delivery
- improving employer engagement by taking advantage economies of scale

Future Evaluation questions

- Did beneficiaries increase their chances of gaining employment? And what are the key barriers to employment?
- How do grantees relate to their local employability context? How do they work with employers? How do they target young people? And how do they keep young people engaged?
- How could the experience and impact of the initiative be improved?

This learning report is drawn from TSIP's Interim evaluation report and quarterly learning workshops with the projects.

Making the Leap.

Making the Leap

Making the Leap has been helping disadvantaged people to prepare for and get into the labour market since 1996 and has been operating from its present location in Kensal Green since 2002. Making the Leap is supporting young black men from all areas of London who have good educational attainment (at least 5 GCSEs) to enter careers in law, banking, local government and other professional roles which offer good opportunities for career progression. The project delivers a programme of skills development and individual career coaching.

Contact: Eugene Blavo Eugene.blavo@MTL.org.uk



Elevation Networks

Elevation Network is a youth employment charity which was established in 2009 to support groups that are traditionally under-represented in the labour market, including ethnic minority young people. Elevations Network is delivering 360°, an employability course for young black men who are actively seeking work. 360° combines job-readiness training with mentoring from senior people in major companies. The aim is to bring unemployed young black men face to face with employers.

Contact: Femi Awoyemi femi@elevationnetworks.org



Step Ahead

Step Ahead is a recruitment company, established in 1997. Since 2010 Step Ahead has also delivered training services to help potential candidates to become job-ready. Step Ahead is supporting young black men to identify and apply for suitable job vacancies.

Contact: Gurpreet Mudhar Gurpreet@stepahead.co.uk



Action West London

Action West London helps disadvantaged people improve their lives through education, employment and enterprise. Action West

London is delivering a recruitment agency model which matches job-ready young black men with suitable employer vacancies, and is also working with employers in west London to raise awareness of the employment barriers facing young black men and to encourage a greater focus on workforce diversity.

Contact: Jonathan Campbell jonathan.Campbell@actionwestlondon.org.uk



Hackney CVS

Hackney CVS is working in partnership with Hackney Council and other stakeholders to deliver a long term strategy to improve outcomes for young black men in the borough. Hackney CVS has supported 10 young black men to become 'peer leaders' who encourage other young black men to engage with and stay involved in activities leading to sustained employment. Working with local partners, the project also provides one to one support to help young black men move into employment, education, training, volunteering or other positive pathways.

Contact: Beth Bolitho Beth.Bolitho@hcvcs.org.uk



London Youth

The Build-it construction-skills employability programme for young people will be expanded and replicated. The on-the-job experience and personalised support it provides, and the targeted communities in which the project runs, result in strong employability outcomes for young black men.

The London Youth project ended in July 2016.

For further information about the Moving on Up Initiative please contact: Jeremy Crook at BTEG Jeremy@bteg.co.uk, Sioned Churchill at Trust for London Sioned@trustforlondon.org.uk



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www.trustforlondon.org.uk