

A Path to Employment for BAME Communities

Bal McVeigh PATH National

PATH National Ltd is a skills development agency, which aims to address the under-representation and inequalities of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups in management and the professions.

London has the **second** highest unemployment rate in England, after the North East of England. While the unemployment rate for white Londoners is in line with the rate for white people in the rest of the UK at **5.1%**, the rate for ethnic minorities is **13.5%**.

Nearly a **third** of all Londoners are from BAME groups. For Londoners to benefit in the rise of employment opportunities in London, its residents, its workforce and its businesses should be offered the right mix of learning and training provision.

Actions to improve qualifications and increase learning will not be sufficient to ensure increased employability of those currently disadvantaged in the labour market. Action is required to improve mobility, access to information, appropriate training, job brokers and recruitment networks and to change attitudes of employers to the provision of training and the recruitment of unemployed people in general, and more specifically, those disadvantaged in the labour market. The linkage between employers and individuals is required at the appropriate level to ensure that individuals get the right job with appropriate support.

The occupational structure of employment is projected to continue to change in favour of managerial, professional, associate professional and technical personal service occupations. In many cases these jobs will require high-level formal qualifications. Areas of rapid growth include teaching, research and science/technology professionals (and associate professionals) and corporate managers. (Skills in England 2003)

The demand for skilled personnel in the public sector i.e. **NHS**, Environmental Health, Planning, Housing, Teaching and Supply needs to increase both now and in the future to meet the growth in the sectors.

A survey of local government in 2004, found that **93.6%** of all authorities reported experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties with one or more professional/managerial occupations.

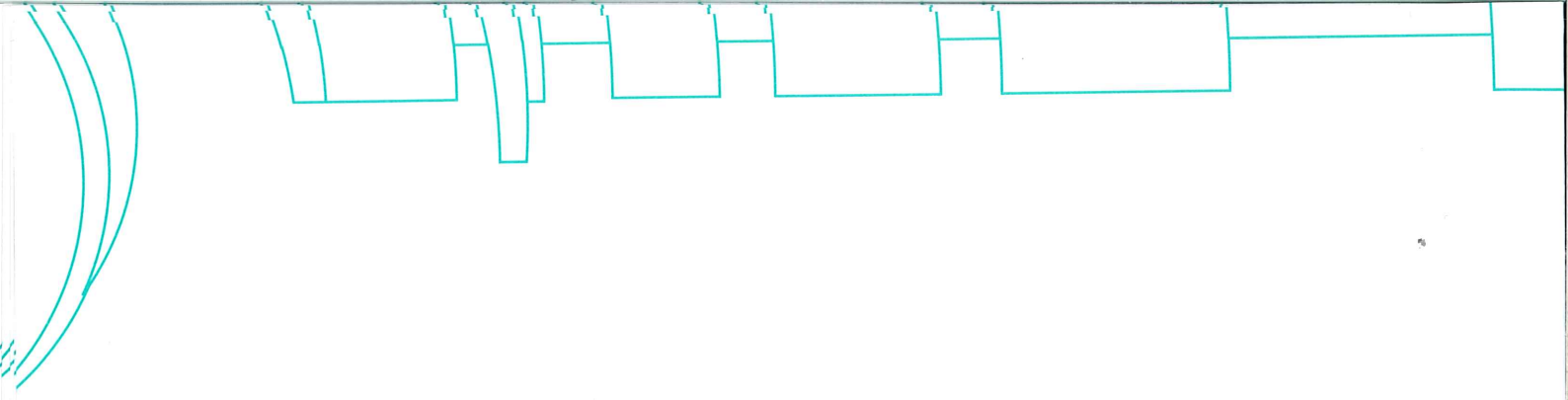
Social workers had the highest recruitment difficulties with **88.6%** of authorities reporting difficulties for children and family social workers (**75%** for community care social workers, **61.4%** for residential social workers and **51.5%** for community care approved social workers). Occupational therapists also had significant recruitment difficulties with **72.7%** of authorities reporting a problem. Other difficulties in recruitment within the top 20 ranged from environmental health (**66.5%**) to electrical engineering (**23.8%**).

Respondents reported an average of **10.5** recruitment and retention difficulties for professional/managerial occupations, highest in London (**19.6**) and the South West (**17**) and the lowest in Eastern England.

The main generic skills gap reported was IT skills (**29%** of reported skills gaps), whilst the main specific skills gap were the need for qualification experience and project management.

A **Trading Standards Workforce** survey conducted by the **Employers Organisation** in 2002 revealed that **268 (8%)** vacancies remain unfilled and that the annual turnover of **10%** doubled since 1995. However the recruitment rate increased by only **2%**. The proportion of ethnic minority staff was just **7%**.

Similarly an **Environmental Health Workforce** survey carried out in 2002 identified that **647** of vacancies remain unfilled. Local authorities identified that recruitment (**61%**) and retention (**38%**) were major issues that needed to be addressed. Whilst a staggering **75%** of local authorities felt the lack of suitable candidates was the main reason for the vacancies remaining unfilled, **47%** of local authorities mentioned that competition from other LA's hindered competition. Only **3.9%** of staff were from ethnic minorities origins. Unemployment rates for BAME groups are generally higher than for the white population. In much of the public sector BAME groups are well represented, however in a number of fields there remains concern that the workforce is unrepresentative of the wider community. In particular, in a number of sub-sectors, whilst overall employment rates are representative, there is often a bias towards BAME employment in lower level jobs. At the same time there is growing recognition that delivery of public services can be improved if the workforce better reflects the community it serves.



Funded by the **London Development Agency**, **PATH** seeks to address under-representation and inequalities by reducing barriers to employment and progression of BAME groups within the public sector. By working in partnership with different public sector organisations, **PATH** identify occupations and job roles where BAME communities are under-represented and develop training solutions to tackle this under-representation. **PATH** will also look to establish the business case for intervention to ensure that partner organisations are aware of the benefits of equal opportunities with a view to developing responses which are integral to the employer's HR function.

The objectives of the project are to provide support to BAME employees and those looking for work in the public sector through the provision of training opportunities and individual support.

We recruit BAME individuals to work in senior positions within public services such as planning, housing, the environment and environmental health. This enables the BAME individuals to learn and understand how public services operate and how they can influence policy and operations within public services. Increasing the number of BAME employees in senior positions improves the confidence of public services in the wider BAME community.

PATH has delivered **Positive Action** schemes for **20 years** whereby BAME individuals are recruited to work within public sectors organisations. We improve BAME access to and expectations of the labour market as **95%** of our candidates secure permanent and senior positions within the public sector. Some of our candidates are unemployed or in low skilled positions. We also support the progression of BAME employees within the workplace by providing management training, mentoring and support.

PATH is keen to hear from public sector employers who wish to create a diverse and reflective workforce. If you are interested in this project and would like further information, please contact **Anusha Wijeyakumar** Project Manager on **020 7001 2000**.

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