

How should employers, schools, colleges and universities work together to help people from minority ethnic communities move into work?

The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that more could be done to support young people moving from school into employment such as greater financial support, better support for young people with additional support needs, counselling services and greater awareness of the mental health issues, respite services for those that require it, and improved affordable transport links.
(Recommendation from [SYP policy](#))

The Scottish Youth Parliament's *#WhatsYourTake* survey received responses from 287 young people across Scotland in March 2020. Based on these responses, in relation to helping young people from minority ethnic communities move into work, the Scottish Youth Parliament recommends:

1. Work experience and placements should be made available to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
2. Interview skill development opportunities, apprenticeships, and peer support / network groups should be made available to young people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In addition to existing SYP policy, 9 MSYPs took part in a focus group to discuss this inquiry. These young people agreed:

- In some schools, ESOL courses are seen as a course to do if there's nothing else to do, whereas in other places students are required to pay to learn English or there are no classes in their local area. Furthermore, there is sometimes stigma associated with attending English as a second language classes, which makes some students feel embarrassed or ashamed. As a result of this discussion, MSYPs feel English as a second language courses should be cheaper and more widely available, and steps should be taken to reduce the stigma of taking part in these courses at schools, colleges, and universities.
- Students who speak a language other than English at home should have the opportunity to gain an additional qualification in that language. The SQA lists nine foreign languages that students in Scotland can gain qualifications in. MSYPs feel this puts some students from a minority ethnic community at a disadvantage. For example, one MSYP explained that in their school Italian students who speak Italian at home have been able to complete National 5 or Higher qualifications in Italian, but students who speak Urdu at home haven't been given the same opportunity to work towards an equivalent qualification in Urdu (despite Urdu being one of the nine languages available for study through the SQA).
- Some schools support 'take your child to work day'. MSYPs feel this should be discouraged because it could create and exacerbate the divide between different types of jobs and the 'type' of person who can access certain careers.
- Employers should make a concerted effort to increase the visibility of a diverse range employees, including those from minority ethnic communities, women, and people with disabilities at careers fayres and in engagements with schools, colleges, and universities.

- There should be a greater focus on improving careers advice and support in schools. By the time a student gets to college or university, they have already started to specialise in a specific subject area, which may restrict their future career options.
- Careers Advisors and guidance staff in schools, colleges, and universities, should take a person-centred approach in their work. They should be aware of individual issues young people face, including language barriers and any cultural or religious challenges or expectations placed upon young people who come from a minority ethnic community. One young person explained “I was once asked whilst being interviewed ... why immigrants “always want to work in call centres or takeaways and have their children become doctors or engineers”. This is a huge generalisation and I believe having preconceived ideas of what sort of jobs a person of colour will end up doing definitely impacts the career advice they will be given.” Schools and colleges should make an active effort to get to know the ambitions and career plans each student has, regardless of their race or background, and provide them with the necessary support to achieve these dreams.

How should employers encourage more people from minority ethnic communities to apply to work with them?

In a Scottish Youth Parliament consultation with young people in March 2020, young people suggested they would like careers fairs or open days to be held more often, with a wider range of employers; there should be more variety in the types of careers promoted to young people; and more time with careers advisers and on work experience placements.

The Scottish Youth Parliament’s 2016-21 youth manifesto, [Lead the Way](#), recommends ‘Youth unemployment should be tackled through job creation and access to training programmes, modern apprenticeships, vocational training, work placements, quality work experience, and paid internships.’ (*Lead the Way statement, 78% young people agree*)

SYP held a focus group with 9 MSYPs to discuss this inquiry. Young people who took part in this discussion agreed:

- Employers need to be more accommodating to people from different cultures. For example, they should respect prayer times, encourage flexible working practises where possible, and allow staff to take time off for religious or cultural festivals.
- Employers should be encouraged to include more diversity in their company’s branding and advertising.
- Job applications should be anonymised to remove unconscious bias in the recruitment process. It should be made clear in job adverts and on the application form that this will be the case. Furthermore, employers should never ask candidates to submit a picture with a job application.
- One young person said: “There are definitely certain careers that attract fewer people of colour to apply for them. I think this is because some professions have just always had a majority white workforce, which makes

it harder to advertise and recommend the job to people from different backgrounds since employees are most likely recommend opportunities to their own families. I think employers could try to reach out to schools, colleges and universities and come in to speak to the pupils as a way to advertise the job to a more diverse group of people.”

What support should employers give to keep people from minority ethnic communities in their organisation? For example, women returning to work.

SYP held a focus group with 9 MSYPs to discuss this inquiry. Young people who took part in this discussion agreed:

- All employers should make clear that they have an anti-racism policy and let their employees know that anything of the sort would not be tolerated. Training should be provided for all staff. Employees should be aware there is someone present in the workplace that they can speak to confidentially if they do experience any form of racial abuse, and that it will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.
- All employees should have access to support in their workplaces. Where possible, employers should have a specific network for employees from minority ethnic communities, to provide an outlet to discuss any issues or challenges, and to provide a platform for employees from a minority ethnic community to be listened to and have their views heard.
- Special consideration should be given to employees’ religious beliefs (e.g. dietary requirements) when organising meetings or work social events so all employees can attend. Prayer spaces should also be made available for employees, and they should be assured that they can take time out of their work to fulfil these religious obligations.
- In some minority ethnic communities, there is stigma about mental health, so employers should enable employees to access a confidential counselling service to talk about mental health problems.
- It should be mandatory for companies to report on how they are paying everyone equally, and therefore employers should be required to report on the ethnicity pay gap.

How do employers deal with racism and discrimination at work? For example, does everyone know their responsibilities?

SYP held a focus group with 9 MSYPs to discuss this inquiry. Young people who took part in this discussion agreed:

- It is important that all employees and employers know the proper reporting procedures for hate crime and discrimination.
- All organisations should have a zero tolerance policy on racism and discrimination which applies to employees, employers, and customers. It is important that all employees know they have a role to play in making

sure people of all backgrounds are respected and made to feel welcome at work.

- One young person spoke about an employer who overlooked discriminatory acts by hard-working staff. Employers should show that cases of racism or discrimination will be taken seriously. Warning schemes are not effective as they are not reassuring to victims. Likewise, racism is often more subtle, and some victims are discouraged from coming forward if they don't feel their concerns will be taken seriously.
- Everyone should have the opportunity to be educated. Whilst there is no excuse for being racist, some people might not understand that they are being discriminatory. There should be opportunities for people to realise their mistakes and to apologise. However, it is also essential that the victim receives appropriate support.

What training and development opportunities should employers have to encourage a diverse workforce?

Focus group findings:

SYP held a focus group with 9 MSYPs to discuss this inquiry. Young people who took part in this discussion agreed:

- Unconscious bias training, such as e-learning modules, is not an effective methods of training as it is very passive, too general, and can oversimplify problems. Instead, training should be more interactive, include discussions, and discuss a range of viewpoints.
- Where possible, diversity training should be developed with people from minority ethnic communities. However, it is important that they are not expected to do all of the work for the employer. It is important that training is balanced and supported by senior management.
- Employers should provide training to ensure every employee has the same basic level of knowledge and awareness to carry out their job. For example, some employees may need support to overcome a language barrier.
- There should be more awareness of the differences between banter or jokes, and racism. Training focus on 'what is racist'. Some people don't understand that what they're doing or saying is racist. Training should also be given on how to spot and tackle discrimination - what you should do if you are on the receiving end or are a witness in a situation.