

Unlocking Talent: Tackling the NEET Challenge for Ethnically Diverse Young People

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“I think being from a minority background does have an influence (on starting a career) because we don’t really get as many opportunities and where we do, they could be restricted.”

Cllr Maheen Kamran, age 18, from Burnley



RACE AT WORK CHARTER: 1162 SIGNATORIES MORE THAN 7 MILLION EMPLOYEES

2. Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress.

4. Inclusive leaders and managers ensure fair access to opportunities and development.

6. Support employees to progress from allyship to solidarity.



1. Leaders and employers support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise

3. Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

5. Inclusive leaders take action that supports ethnically diverse employee career progression.

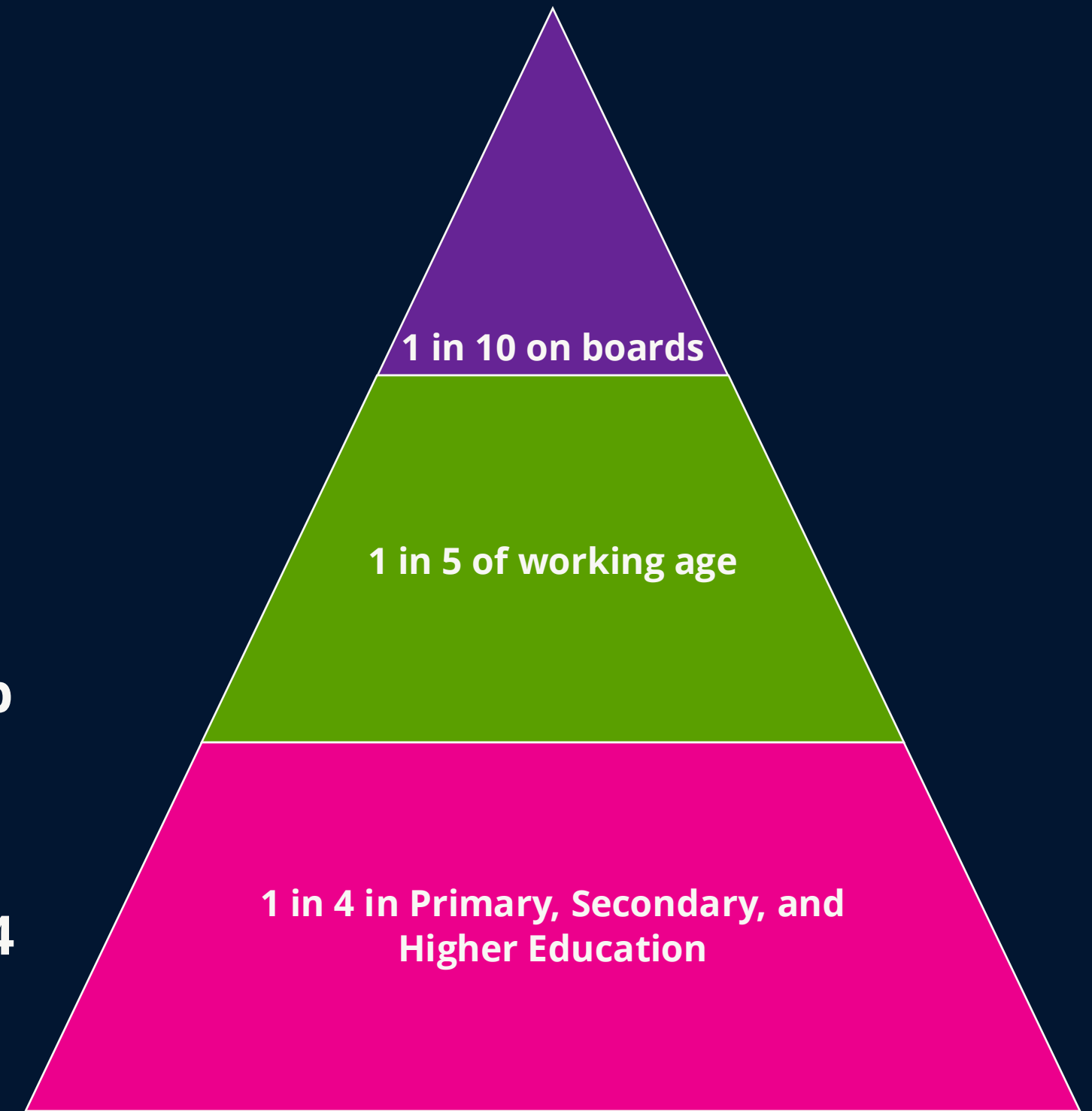
7. Include ethnically diverse-led small business, founders and enterprise owners in supply chains.

Magenta = Updated as part of the 2025 Race at Work Charter Reset



THE CASE FOR ACTION

- ❖ **£37bn boost annually** to UK economy if racial disparities tackled and small business economic contribution could grow from **£25bn to £100bn**
- ❖ **18.3%** of the population England and Wales is ethnically diverse.
- ❖ Those from a **Mixed-Race** background working in sales and services identified an average pay range gap of **£3,775**.
- ❖ **Black Caribbean** young people have the highest NEET rate at **29.4%** despite making up just **1.5%** of the 18–24 population in England and Wales.
- ❖ Bangladeshi and Pakistani managers average annual gap **£4,186** and Black African managers average annual pay gap **£2,134**.



Race in the workplace: McGregor-Smith Review (2017)
Unlocking Opportunity (2020)
socioeconomic factors in the UK by ethnic group (2022)
Parker Review update (2024)

Supporting ethnically diverse young people into good work

Kate Carr



The challenge

The rate of 16-to-24-year-olds in the UK who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is **worsening**. Today, **1 in 8** young people are not earning or learning.

That's over 900,000.

For a young person, being NEET can lead to:

- Poor mental health with a higher risk of depression or anxiety diagnosis.
- Increased likelihood of unemployment, low wages or low-quality work later in life.
- Increased social exclusion.

And some groups face steeper barriers:

- Ethnically diverse
- Care experienced
- Criminal justice experienced
- Learning difficulties
- Autism
- Mental health challenges

**£86bn
economic
boost**



What the evidence tells us

Discrimination and unequal treatment are widespread

- 48% of ethnically-minoritised young people experienced prejudice or discrimination when trying to enter work
- 26% said discrimination based on ethnicity was the main barrier in their career
- Two-thirds overheard racial slurs or 'jokes' at work
- 79% who experienced discrimination did not report it
- 76% had experienced feeling that they had to work harder than others to get the same treatment as colleagues.
- 41% said discrimination had a negative emotional impact on their daily life
- 73% looked for work with other employers and 71% even considered changing industries entirely after experiencing discrimination.
- Young people from ethnically-minoritised backgrounds are half as likely as their white peers to start an apprenticeship

Awareness

Application

Experience

Retention

Achievement



What employers can do (and why evidence matters)

Strong business case

- Changing demographics
- Closing critical skills gaps
- Retention and cost savings
- Improved team performance
- Reputation, brand and customer expectations
- Futureproof against regulatory and investor pressure

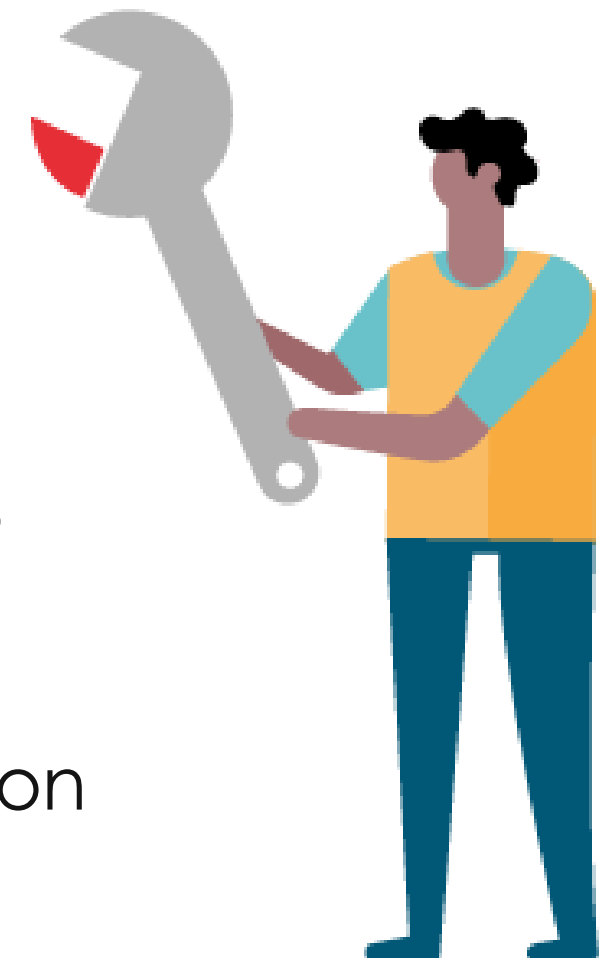
Make your investment count:
Use evidence to make smart, targeted choices about which interventions will make the biggest impact.

Driving change

- Inclusive outreach and recruitment
- Zero-tolerance on discrimination
- Build inclusive workplace culture
- Ethnicity pay gap reporting

Use the evidence

- Youth Employment Toolkit 2.0
- Youth Employment Outlook 2025
- Discrimination and work Survey
- Ethnic disparities and apprenticeship participation
- Talent Unlocked Programme
- What Works in Recruitment & Retention Programme



Breakout discussion

Barriers to work for ethnically diverse NEET talent

On your tables will be a post-it note, with a prompt connected to one of four areas:

- Outreach, recruitment and selection
- Onboarding
- Progression and Belonging
- Data collection

You'll have 10 minutes to talk through your prompts on your tables – a BITC colleague will be on each table to guide the conversation.





Employer Spotlight

Adam Brown

**Community Impact Assistant
Manager, Culture & Brand**

**Grant Thornton UK Advisory & Tax
LLP**





Implementations from across the network



Currently working on enhancing the visibility and uptake of their early careers mentoring programme



Have rolled out a work experience programme over the last few years that has been able to provide local young people (inc. 80% from ethnically diverse backgrounds) with an employability boosting programme with a focus on DEI and social mobility

Call to action

- Share your current journey in hiring / retaining ethnically diverse young people through completing the Talent Unlocked survey.
 - The survey takes around 10 minutes, and in return, you'll get access to our findings on what works, a suite of tools and resources, and the chance to hear directly from other employers.
 - Sign up to BITC's Race at Work Charter and Opening Doors campaigns to demonstrate your organisation's commitment to race equality and inclusive recruitment in the workplace.
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