

DECEMBER 2020 UPDATE
OF THE
BLACK FURTHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP GROUP UK

Dear supporters and signatories

Open letter to address systemic racism in further education 4 August 2020

Surprisingly but very welcome, our Open letter to Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson, Prime Minister, RT Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education, funders of further education colleges, regulatory bodies & further education membership bodies continues to generate interest and activity within the sector. There is also now growing and significant interest from a diverse range of external organisations.

The number of signatories to the Open letter has continued to grow and today, Thursday 17 December stands at 347 – up from 310 on 13 November. (Please see attached).

BFELG focus

BFELG membership stands at 422 up from 340 this time last month. Members include current and former governors, principals, senior leaders, managers, lecturers, business services staff in Further and Higher Education, local Council staff and other interested individuals.

Over the past few months BFELG sub groups, each with its own chair, have been formed and are developing their aims and activities under the umbrella of the BFELG mission, vision and values:

- BFELG middle managers
- BFELG senior leaders
- BFELG CEOs
- BFELG former CEOs
- BFELG Chairs/Governors
- BFELG Consultants

The following sub-groups will be launched in the new year:

- BFELG Teachers/Lecturers
- BFELG HE

Additionally, and in response to requests, we are planning to establish a range of mechanisms to support members. We are delighted that Asfa Sohail, Principal of Lewisham College has agreed to provide leadership for developing and overseeing BFELG mentoring support structures.

The November meeting agenda of the full BFELG membership focused on:

- Hot Topic: BFELG Narrative, Language and terminology related to race equality

- Deep Dive: Apprenticeships: facilitated by Asfa Sohail, Principal, Lewisham College included a discussion of member Omolola Olaleye's PhD research project '*Apprenticeships: Breaking Down Barriers for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Youth?*'
- Presentation: *The Social Consciousness of the FE sector* by Palvinder Singh, Group Deputy Principal, Kidderminster College/NCG: What 2030 might look like in the context of social and race disparity, the politics and media landscape, and the post 16 skills context over the decade.

If any supporters are able to support Omolola by providing access to students /apprentices for interviews, please contact blackfeleadershipgroup@gmail.com.

The BFELG series of thought leadership articles published in FE News will continue in January 2021.

Previous articles in the series include:

September:

Contribution by BFELG member, Amarjit Basi <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/54198-black-fe-leaders-group-if-not-us-who-if-not-now-when>

And in a wide ranging FE News podcast interview, Amarjit Basi and Robin Landman OBE, Executive team members unpacked key BFELG perspectives <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/224-podcasts/55930-unpacking-the-black-fe-leadership-group-with-robin-landman-and-amarjit-basi>

October:

Contribution by one of the very few minority ethnic Chair of Governors in the sector, Shaid Mahmood (Luminate Education Group Chair) and BFELG member in which he calls on all FE Chairs and the sector to address the issue of further education leadership, governance and management not adequately representing the make-up of some of the communities it serves: *Further Education leadership, governance and management is at crossroads* <https://fenews.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b50579c7e5d0a0937b529c7f9&id=e936159040&e=c01caee76e>

November:

An excellent contribution by BFELG member, Suki Dhesi Vice Principal – Teaching, Learning & Quality/Head of Havant Campus, HSDC: <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/57449-why-the-blue-eyed-brown-eyed-experiment-is-even-more-relevant-50-years-on>. Suki writes about how as part of their whole college training day, HSDC used the BFELG '[**10 Point Plan**](#)' to facilitate their understanding of actions required to address racism.

System level engagement

Ofsted

We are absolutely delighted that following our initial approach, Ofsted have confirmed their commitment to taking forward a training/coaching/inspection shadowing scheme for aspiring senior leaders/principals in a formal programme designed in collaboration with BFELG. This is great news! Both Ofsted and BFELG recognise the mutual benefits of such a programme which could replicate the BLI/Ofsted programme with some revisions. The aim would be to have the programme, aspects of which would be on-line, up and running this academic year.

We are grateful to the following BFELG members who supported our meeting with Paul Joyce HMI, Ofsted Deputy Director, Further Education and Skills: Gloria Dolan (former Senior Ofsted HMI who established and managed the original BLI/Ofsted scheme), Paul Cook (Principal & Chief Executive Hereward College), Altaf Hussain (Principal & Chief Executive Luton Sixth Form College) and Kam Nandra (Director of Quality, Hertford Regional College).

Programme design of the new Ofsted/BFELG scheme will be led by Gloria Dolan and a senior Ofsted HMI. We very much look forward to the next steps in this new development.

DfE

Following two highly productive meetings, BFELG Executive made a data driven presentation to senior officials from across the DfE. The presentation focused on making the most of a diverse Britain and was very well received. We anticipate that the forthcoming White Paper and implementation will be informed by black perspectives on issues relating to workforce, students and communities.

Our dialogue with DfE continues to emphasise the importance of the comprehensive collection of FE workforce data. We have been asked to encourage participation in associated research.

As a reminder, our November Update highlighted that the ESFA is developing a mandatory [data collection for the further education workforce](#), on behalf of DfE. Due to the importance of this exercise, we are repeating this section of our last Update in full below:

Before the collection is launched, it is important that all of the questions and answer options are clear and easy to understand and that the collection is easy to navigate and fill in. It is planned to open the collection in June / July 2021 to collect data on the academic year 2020/21.

In order to ensure the data collection is as user friendly as possible, ESFA are undertaking user testing of aspects of the data collection. These testing sessions are specifically aimed at those with responsibility for HR data or who would potentially fill out the data collection within providers. The user testing will happen over Microsoft Teams and each session will take approximately an hour. If you are a potential data collection user and would be interested in taking part please contact alex.perry@education.gov.uk. Your input and feedback will be valuable.

We also urge all BFELG supporters and members to respond to the data collection when it opens.

Collection of workforce data links directly to Priority 4 of the BFELG 10 Point Plan so we are advocating rigour and completeness of sectoral data for the current year. We are concerned about the state of sectoral governance data in particular, and very mindful of the need to further refine and contextualise data collection and analysis in the light of emergent changes in the governance and leadership structures associated with the FE Sector, for example Large College Group structures and Reciprocal Governance structures.

Sectoral level engagement

BFELG relationships with sector organisations and stakeholders continue to develop. We now have regular cycles of meetings with the CEOs of the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), and City & Guilds.

Since our last Update, we have had productive conversations with the CEOs of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), Colleges Scotland, Advance HE, and Google Education. Areas of collaboration have already been established with each organisation.

For this Update, we are pleased to include directly from the Association of Colleges (AoC), the paragraph below which highlights their work in our mutual areas of interest:

The AoC Leadership Summit hosted a large number of senior leaders and governors in November. The keynote speech delivered by Dr Leroy Logan MBE followed by the panel discussion on the journey to an inclusive organisation, with a particular focus on addressing the low proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic leaders within further education offered some real insights into the work carried out within the adult education sector through positive action. Shaid Mahmood (now Chair of AoC) spoke on developing a culture of inclusive leadership and governance. In the same week, thousands of students accessed our first event focussed on this audience, Colleges Live, which included speakers such as Ana Carolina Corrãa, speaking about global climate change, Jerri Williams, on her journey as a Black Woman to becoming a leading FBI agent and EDI advocate and Edgar Feuchwanger, a German British historian, whose family were neighbours of Hitler, talking about the rise of Nazi Germany. This week at AoC we continue our internal journey to ensure an inclusive and welcoming culture for all, with the senior management team being inducted into the Leaders in Diversity process, which will result in targets and an action plan which all managers will own. Once this is complete it will be shared on our EDI webpage and updated as appropriate. The sector facing EDI steering group met early in December, an updated version of the action plan with activities noted can be found on the [EDI hub](#).

We are appreciative of our partnership with the AoC. Whilst the BFELG does not endorse approaches which subsume anti-racism under the broad Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) heading, we are pleased to continue to act as a critical friend and to highlight AoC's growing work in the area of, and commitment to anti-racism.

We have met with several trade unions recently and are very disappointed with their response. We will be looking closely at how they support Black staff.

Engagement with Colleges

On December 1, the BFELG Executive met with College CEO supporters and signatories to our Open letter for the first time as a group. We discussed our journey so far and our plans for the future. Their feedback was positive and they are considering how to provide solid collective advocacy for the work of BFELG, how they can mobilise additional signatories to our Open letter and how they can support and contribute to BFELG sustainability.

Over the last two months we have been developing a Toolkit to accompany the BFELG 10 Point Plan. BFELG member Mandeep Gill, and Martin Rosner a signatory to our Open letter, Principal/CEO and Chair of Governors respectively of Newham Sixth Form College are trialling the Toolkit with their governing body.

We are pleased to be supporting Peter Mayhew-Smith, CEO of South Thames College Group (STCG), one of the biggest college groups in the sector, in leading a whole organisation conversation on Antiracism.

And in response to the diverse needs of the sector and to support BFELG priorities we are planning a range of exciting events for 2021. More about these events in the coming months.

Celebration of Success

BFELG's unique set of values, described as **Values that Unite Us**, draws on the commonalities across the best of our African, Asian, British, Caribbean, European, Middle Eastern diverse heritage. One of these values states that 'Woven through everything we are and what we do, are colourful threads of **belonging** and **joyful celebration**.' Accordingly, we are delighted to celebrate the recent appointments of our members to various positions:

- Congratulations to our member Shaid Mahmood on his appointment as Chair of the Association of Colleges (AoC), a historic achievement! Shaid is Chair of Governors at the Luminate Education Group in Leeds and one of only four minority ethnic Chairs of Governors in English FE
- Congratulations to our member Pat Carvalho who has been appointed to the post of Principal & CEO at BMet. Pat is currently Principal at Harrow College and Deputy CEO of Uxbridge/Harrow College
- Congratulations to our members Lynette Leith, Assistant Principal for Technical and Vocational Studies, Newham Sixth Form College and Palvinder Singh, Group Deputy Principal, Kidderminster College, NCG who have been appointed Trustee Board members by Education and Training Foundation
- Congratulations to our members, Janak Patel, Robin Landman and Natalie Garner who have been appointed governors at Kidderminster College, Lewisham College and East Kent College respectively

- Congratulations to Robin Landman for his appointment to the Race Advisory Committee of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). Robin is a Companion of the Institute (CCMI)

We at the BFELG are proud to have been part of creating the environment that led to these appointments, which we hope augurs well for a more ethnically diverse future for our sector.

Appreciation

To say that 2020 has been a very difficult year, is an understatement. In spite of it all, our supporters and allies have made time to engage with us. We have been overwhelmed by the open support you have shown, your commitment and willingness to act. Thank you.

We have noticed that each time we have issued an Update, there has been a good response to our request below. So here it is again!

Please do continue to support the BFELG in the following ways:

For college leaders:

- Share our Open Letter with your staff, students, governors and other stakeholders and encourage conversations and dialogue
- Explore, adopt and implement the BFELG 10 Point Plan in your organisation
- Adopt the use of anti-racism terminology

For other leaders

- Share the BFELG Open letter with your staff, networks and encourage conversations and dialogue within your spheres of influence
- Explore, adopt/adapt and implement the BFELG 10 Point Action in your organisation
- Adopt and use anti-racism terminology
- Consider becoming a college governor in your local community
- Consider becoming a mentor to a BFELG member who works in a college

Thank you once again for all you are doing for students, staff and communities in these difficult times. In whatever particular circumstances or Tier you find yourselves in, do stay safe.

With our very best wishes for a peaceful holiday and Christmas season, and a 2021 that is better for all in every way!

Stella

Stella Ngozi Mbubaegbu CBE

17 December 2020

On behalf of the Black Further Education Leadership Group