



Activist. Authentic. Authoritative.

**JANUARY 2021 UPDATE  
OF THE  
BLACK FURTHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP GROUP UK**

Dear supporters, stakeholders, friends and signatories

I am pleased to bring you our first Update of 2021 and to wish everyone a good year that gets better for us all in every way.

**Black Further Education Leadership Group: TES People of the Year 2020**

We were absolutely delighted and greatly encouraged to start the year 2021 with the above award from the Times Educational Supplement (TES)! This recognition for our work to highlight the systemic nature of racism in FE was totally unexpected. We know that there is a long road ahead in the journey to secure sustainable change. However, the goodwill and positive responses from our many supporters, allies, stakeholders, friends and signatories have given us hope for a better future in which anti-racism is firmly at the heart of the FE system for the benefit of all.

**Thank you TES!**

**Open letter to address systemic racism in further education 5 August 2020**

It is now nearly 6 months since we published 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 and further education membership bodies.

The number of signatories to the Open letter (attached with an updated list of signatories) has continued to grow almost daily from 40 on 5 August 2020 to 397 as at today Friday 29 January. If you have not already done so, please read our Open letter and consider becoming a signatory. You can contact us by emailing [blackfeleadershipgroup@gmail.com](mailto:blackfeleadershipgroup@gmail.com).

To all our supporters, signatories and allies 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

### **Launch of BFELG 10 Point Plan Diagnostic Toolkit**

In this Update, we would like to highlight specific developments arising from the **call to action** contained in the Open letter. The **call to action** comprises of 10 proposals in the areas of Curriculum, Culture, Climate and Communications. The proposals, have now been concretised as the BFELG 10 Point Plan which is being used by a number of institutions to guide their anti-racism journeys.

We are delighted to announce that in response to requests for support to implement the 10 Point Plan, we have developed the *BFELG 10 Point Plan Diagnostic Toolkit* and this will be launched on **23 February at 15.30**. The on-line open access launch event will include a demonstration of the Toolkit and opportunities to hear from organisations that have been using the 10 Point Plan or who have trialled the *Toolkit*.

We are confident that the *Toolkit* will enable organisations operating across the breadth of post-16 education and skills to undertake a comprehensive audit on their antiracist practice. The *Toolkit* is designed in such a way that it can be tailored to the unique contexts in which individual organisations operate, and can be used at multiple levels. Applied effectively, it can act as a vehicle for deep and wide-ranging system change. This requires high-level leadership commitment, founded on the recognition that cultural change has to be led from the top. It also affirms that sustained action is more critical than statements of intent, or a simple adjustment in numbers.

During the launch, we will also provide information on the package of support that the BFELG will offer to organisations using the *Toolkit*.

### **BFELG Inaugural Conference in partnership with Google for Education**

Our Inaugural Conference '**Making the most of an ethnically diverse Britain: the role of Further Education**' will take place on **23 February 10.00 -15.15**. This event,

is particularly timely in the light of the recently published FE White Paper, *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*.

The conference programme has been influenced by the lived experience of black students and staff referenced in our Open letter, the accompanying Editorial Notes and the 10 Point Plan. Highlights of the event will include hard-hitting BFELG Research revealing the full extent of the challenges in creating an Anti-Racist FE system, actions to address and effect permanent change and opportunities for participants to contribute and to influence the debate.

Tickets for both the Conference and Toolkit Launch are now available through Eventbrite:

<https://events.withgoogle.com/bfelg-inaugural-conference/>

### **System level engagement**

The long awaited FE White Paper, *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth* was published on 21 January. In the Foreword, the Secretary of State for Education, Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP locates the ambitions of the White Paper firmly within the context of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, preparing to recover and rebuild in its aftermath, as well as seizing the opportunities arising from our exit from the European Union. He highlights that our best chance of success as a nation, at this critical juncture, is to ensure everyone has the skills which will allow them to get good jobs, both now and in the future. These are the underpinning themes and context of our solutions-focussed and timely Inaugural Conference **‘Making the most of an ethnically diverse Britain: the role of Further Education’**.

We very much welcome the government’s commitment to Lifelong Learning and to provide, through the White Paper, the levers to unleash the talent and creativity of everyone; the reinforcement of the pivotal role of further and technical education and the focus on excellent teaching; the much-needed investment to support skills delivery. We endorse the clear core mission for further education to support post-16 skills and the defined roles of employers at the heart of the system.

Through our work with the DfE and our stakeholders, we look forward to playing our part in the implementation of the White Paper, including contributing our expertise and unique Black perspectives on issues relating to workforce, students and communities. We recognise the importance of employers enacting their responsibilities for ensuring ethnic diversity in the workforce. This should include, in our view, action to address the historically low participation rates of Black people in apprenticeships. Practical action is urgently needed to ensure both the development and representation of Black talent across the system and at all levels and to provide support for those communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Our engagement with the DfE and other system leaders continues to emphasise the importance of the comprehensive collection of FE workforce data. The ESFA are leading the design of the new FE Workforce Data Collection, which is due to launch in June 2021. Colleagues in DfE are supporting this work.

On 18 January, we participated in a DfE/ESFA workshop to discuss the draft data specifications and progress so far. Following the workshop we joined a group of external workforce data stakeholders on 26 January to discuss further areas to feed into the design of the collection exercise. The group has suggested setting up a Data Users group to feed our expertise and concerns into the project.

The DfE/ESFA are continuing to engage in user research with providers to ensure that their insight continues informing the development of the data collection so that it is accessible, user friendly and relevant to the whole FE sector to complete and use. They have asked us to support upcoming rounds of user research and cognitive testing by inviting our contacts who are provider data collection users to partake in an hour-long session over Microsoft Teams. If you are able to support this request, please contact [alex.perry@education.gov.uk](mailto:alex.perry@education.gov.uk).

Collection of workforce data links directly to Priority 4 of the BFELG 10 Point Plan, therefore, we will continue to advocate for rigour *and completeness of sectoral data* and work with stakeholders on this to make sure the FE workforce data collection is as useful as possible to everyone working to improve the sector.

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

### **Sectoral level engagement**

BFELG relationships with sector organisations and stakeholders continue to develop including through established regular cycles of planning and review meetings with several CEOs.

At the invitation of ColegauCymru, on 26 January, we attended the launch of *The College of the Future for Wales – a nations-specific final report*. Set within the wider policy context of *The Future Generations Act (2015)*, the *Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, Towards 2030: A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education for Wales* and the *Review of higher education funding and student finance arrangements*, the report calls for decisive action now to create the colleges that are needed as the world changes. Of particular interest was the recommendation to undertake a review of representation in leadership structures with a focus on systematic, mandatory data collection on college leaders and governors by protected characteristics. There is a clear statement that colleges must be led by systems leaders who reflect the communities within which they are based and the students they serve.

Following on from our initial meetings with their Chief Executive and BFELG supporter Tom Bewick, we had an excellent meeting on 29 January with the joint chairs of the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB), Kirstie Donnelly MBE, CEO City and Guilds and Alan Woods OBE, CEO VTCT. We look forward to working with FAB on joint priorities within the awarding and assessment sector.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and the Association of Colleges (AoC), BFELG partners, have jointly appointed Jeffrey Greenidge as Director for Diversity. Jeff is an experienced teacher, coach and leadership mentor who has worked across the education and training sector. The role will see him driving plans to increase diversity within the Further Education (FE) workforce, particularly at senior levels, and

promoting inclusive practice in colleges and other parts of the sector. It will include a specific strand of work on race equality and anti-racism, engaging with the Government, the sector and expert groups such as the Black FE Leadership Group. Jeff started in the role on 11 January and has since met with us to begin to establish joint priorities.

As in previous Updates, we are pleased to include directly from the AoC, the paragraph below:

*AoC and BFELG are working on a number of key strands together over the next 12 months and one of these is raising the profile of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders, teachers and students in further education and profiling the excellent contribution they are making to their college and local communities. There are a number of areas in which we would encourage nominations and applications, through AoC's Beacon Awards, Student of the Year Awards and Queen's honours. AoC's awards will be opening for applications later in the year and we will ensure these are flagged in your newsletter. Honours' nominations are now being sought for the New Year 2022. The Honours Select Committee has provided [extensive guidance](#) on the completion of citation forms.*

*The final AoC deadline for nominations for New Year 2022 is Friday 19 March 2021 at 10am. For Queen's Birthday nominations 2022 it is Friday 20 August 2021 at 10am. Nominations can be submitted from now until both dates. You can submit a short citation through AoC or a long Citation directly to the Honours Select Committee, AoC is pleased to provide additional support and guidance for nominations from the FE sector whichever is the chosen submission route.*

*If in the meantime there are any queries, please contact Jenny John: [Jenny.John@aoc.co.uk](mailto:Jenny.John@aoc.co.uk)*

## **Engagement with Colleges**

Not surprisingly, the beginning of term has seen colleges thoroughly immersed in the ever increasing complexities and daily difficulties of operating within the pandemic environment. We have continued to provide support as requested. We are listening to the issues, taking action and providing and obtaining feedback in order to ensure that the work of the BFELG remains contextual and relevant.

## **BFELG membership focus**

BFELG membership stands at 517 up from 442 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.

Our January 2021 meeting of the full BFELG membership focused on:

- Celebrations
- A review of BFELG in 2020
- BFELG plans for 2021

This meeting was preceded earlier on in the month by a similar review and planning meeting between the BFELG Black CEOs and the Executive.

The Inaugural meeting of the BFELG Teachers' Network was also held in January. This practitioner group will be of critical importance in framing our work on decolonising the FE curriculum, a key priority of our 10 Point Plan.

Continuing our series in FE News, the first article of 2021 was an Open letter from the BFELG to the FE Commissioner appointment panel, emphasising that the right appointment will set the tone for a more collegiate relationship between those who run the colleges and strategic decision makers: <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/61732-open-letter-from-bfelg-to-the-fe-commissioner-appointment-panel>.

Previous articles in the series include:

### **December 2020:**

A Christmas message from the BFELG: why Johnny Mathis sounds different this year! – article by Amarjit Basi reflecting on the progress of the Black FE Leadership Group in 2020: <https://lnkd.in/g5tRY4w>

### **November 2020:**

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.

### **October 2020:**

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>

### **September 2020:**

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>

## **Celebration of Success**

In our December Update we shared from our BFELG's unique set of values, described as **Values that Unite Us**, which 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 Denise Charles who has become a member of the Race Equality Commissioning Group chaired by Lord Simon Woolley
- Congratulations to Dipa Ganguli OBE on the award of this national honour
- Congratulations to Jeff Greenidge who has been appointed to the role of Director of Diversity at AoC/ETF
- Congratulations to Sheila Rai on her appointment as Assistant Principal at Capital City College Group.

## **Appreciation**

THANK YOU to John Beaty, Deputy Principal, and Andrew Pask Senior Designer – Graphic & Digital from Burton and South Derbyshire College (BFELG allies), for their fantastic support to develop the BFELG Logo/Branding!

We remain grateful to you our expanding group of friends, colleagues, supporters, allies and stakeholders for all that you do for students, staff and communities in these difficult times. Please stay safe.

We look forward to working with you in 2021 and hopefully meet again in person or for the very first time, sometime soon.

Best wishes

***Stella***

**Stella Ngozi Mbubaegbu CBE**

**29 January 2021**

**On behalf of the Black Further Education Leadership Group**