

BLACK FURTHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP GROUP UK

13 October 2020

Dear supporters and signatories

October Update on Black Further Education Leadership Group (BFELG) 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

Our ***Open letter to address systemic racism in further education*** 4 August 2020 continues to generate interest and activity within the sector. Indeed the response has been overwhelming, demonstrating that there is a real desire within the FE system and sector not only to begin to understand and grapple with the difficult and often painful systemic issues of racism but to lay the foundations for positive and sustainable change. Since our first Update to you on Friday 5 September, the number of signatories to the Open letter has continued to grow and today, Tuesday 13 October, stands at 224 – up from 140. (Please see attached). Over 27% of college Principals/CEOs and/or Chairs are now signatories.

BFELG focus

BFELG itself has grown in less than three months to a membership of 248. In our context, 'Black' is used as an inclusive definition. It refers to minority ethnic protagonists from diverse, cultural and community backgrounds, who share lived experiences of the effects of racial inequalities, and who are unified in membership of the BFELG, a dynamic anti-racist movement for sustainable change.

In a wide ranging FE News podcast interview, Amarjit Basi and Robin Landman OBE, Executive team members unpack key BFELG perspectives

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/224-podcasts/55930-unpacking-the-black-fe-leadership-group-with-robin-landman-and-amarjit-basi>

Embracing difference is an excellent opinion piece by Anshi Singh (Basingstoke College of Technology) in which she writes hauntingly '***If you don't see colour, you don't see me***'. This can be found on page 9 of the Autumn 2020 edition of InTuition – the journal for professional teachers and trainers in the further education and training sector:

https://issuu.com/redactive/docs/intuition_autumn_2020_linked?fr=sMDBmNDY3MzMwMA

And in an FE News feature article *Further Education leadership, governance and management is at crossroads*, published yesterday 12 October, one of the very few minority ethnic Chair of Governors in the sector, Shaid Mahmood (Luminate Education Group Chair) and BFELG member, issues a resonant clarion call to action to all FE Chairs and the sector: ***'We are better than this FE....We must be better than this FE!'***

Five BFELG members have been invited to contribute to important research feeding into *Leadership, Careers provision and a New Dawn*, a think piece commissioned by the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL), and designed to stimulate ideas and discussion on how best to create pathways to success for young people and adults as part of a leadership movement dedicated to improving transitions in turbulent and unpredictable times.

System level engagement

You would have already received Minister Gillian Keegan's positive reply to our Open letter, our response and the related media release following which FE News and TES carried the story:

FE News: <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/55925-gillian-keegan-pledges-to-eliminate-racism-and-to-address-racial-inequalities-in-fe>

TES : <https://www.tes.com/news/minister-pledges-work-stamp-out-racism-fe>

We were also very pleased to receive a positive response to our Open letter from Paul Joyce, Deputy Director, Further Education and Skills, Ofsted. As Ofsted is such a powerful agent of change, their unequivocal and stated commitment to a sector and society free from racism is particularly welcome at this time. In the letter, Paul Joyce referenced Ofsted's long history of supporting the Black Leadership Initiative (BLI). Many of you will recall the joint and extremely valuable BLI/Ofsted training/coaching/inspection shadowing scheme which had real impact. Both the BLI participants and HMIs benefited from this unique professional development experience as did the colleges involved.

At the request of the DfE Workforce Development Unit, we met with their representatives who wanted to develop a better understanding of the barriers to equality and the issues. A major discussion point was the lack of data for measuring baselines and the timescales involved for the new FE Workforce data collection. We are very pleased that the DfE have now agreed mandatory submission of workforce data for the 2021/22 academic year. Our understanding is that for the first collection in the 2020/21 academic year, providers will be strongly encouraged to complete it to help ready the sector and further refine the service.

Targeting those in HR roles, the DfE are keen to recruit providers who are willing to participate in further user research and cognitive testing. Mandatory collection of workforce data links directly to Priority 4 of the BFELG 10 Point Plan, therefore, we would urge all BFELG supporter and member CEOs/Principals to support this research ahead of first collection. Dr Richard.GARRETT@education.gov.uk Head of Surveys and Research, Skills Policy Analysis is the contact for further details.

We are pleased to have been invited by the DfE to a meeting to input into the White Paper and are very much looking forward to this opportunity.

Sectoral level engagement

We have had constructive dialogues with AELP, Federation of Awarding Bodies and WorldSkills UK and hope to be able to report on concrete plans for working together for the benefit of staff, students and apprentices in our next Update.

BFELG is now meeting regularly with AoC and ETF chief executives. We are particularly pleased with the levels of openness, transparency and commitment to support the BFELG and our 10 Point Plan. Last week, we had an excellent session with Acting AoC Chair Gerry McDonald, AoC President Sally Dicketts CBE and David Hughes AoC Chief Executive. Facilitated by the AoC, we also had the opportunity of an evidence session with the Commission for the College of the Future. This was well supported by four BFELG member CEOs: Satwant Deol (Henley College), Anthony Bravo (Basingstoke College of Technology, Andy Forbes (City of Bristol College), and Denise Brown (Stoke on Trent College).

Engagement with Colleges

The number of college senior leadership teams and boards looking at how they can engage with the BFELG 10 Point Plan internally is growing. We are considering mechanisms for sharing good practice. More about this in the future. Meanwhile, we are beginning to work with Principals/CEOs who have reached out to us for support to diagnose and implement sustainable change in their organisations.

Virtual International Conference: Evolving Education & Careers 20-22 October 2020

Amarjit Basi, BFELG member, will be representing us and speaking at the Conference. Drawing on compelling data on racial inequalities collected by the BFELG, his session on

Leadership & Equality: Why the last thing we need is a Post Pandemic Reset is highly topical. Here is the link to the Conference <https://dmhassociates.org/conference>. I do hope many of you will be able to attend.

We continue to be highly appreciative of the open support you have shown, your commitment and willingness to act thereby contributing in no small measure to the progress we have made in such a short period. Please do continue to support our initial and strong recommendations 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

Defeating Covid 19

We are very much aware of how dealing with Covid 19 has greatly affected the work of an already complex sector and the lives of the students, staff and the communities we serve. It would seem that the nation is poised for a second wave of the pandemic amid a surge of infections. We know that vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected. At a recent BFELG members' meeting we heard how after consideration of a public health report, one college undertook a risk assessment of **all** staff and put in place action plans. We also heard of the many practical steps and innovations being put in place by so many colleges.

Thank you all for what you are doing in these difficult times.

With our very best wishes

Stella

Stella Ngozi Mbubaegbu CBE

On behalf of the Black Further Education Leadership Group

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