



BLG AFFILIATED ORGANISATION
CASE STUDY SERIES 2024

CASE STUDY
**LEADING
ANTI-RACISM
CONVERSATIONS**



Supporting Managers to Lead Anti-racism Conversations with their Teams; utilising the BLG SALT framework alongside the High Performing Teams model to prioritise anti-racism and to focus on behaviours that support the College's ongoing work.

About BMet

We are a large further education college in Birmingham with approximately 800 staff and around 10,000 students made up a fairly even split of 16-18 and adult vocational, A' level, higher education learners as well as apprentices. We have 3 large campuses and additional satellite centres – each with their own idiosyncrasies and curriculum provision including construction, engineering, horticulture, sport, health and social care, computing, creative services, dentistry, and ESOL. Over two thirds of our students come from the most deprived wards in Birmingham and therefore for the UK. We are fiercely proud of our student population representing the City's multicultural and vibrant community. In 2023/24 the student population consisted of 69.9% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students, 4.0% Other White groups and 22.2% White British. 3.9% have not provided their ethnic status. Of the BAME students, Black African learners are the single largest group (16.8% of overall student population) followed by Pakistani students at 14.2% of the overall student population.

Our employee profile data (from November 2023) shows that 29.8% are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background (BAME), 57.2% White British, 3.3% White Other and 7.0% not known (+2.8% prefer not to say).

Our starting point

Approaching 2021/22 we had established fairly solid foundations and had a range of existing mechanisms supporting the College's work to drive diversity and inclusion. These included:

- A Diversity and Inclusion strategy incorporating actions and activities around increasing participation of under-represented groups; for example improving the ethnic diversity in leadership
- Staff and student networks, ambassadors and champions building capacity around D&I
- Range of staff and student engagement activities – surveys, focus groups etc
- Engagement with the Student Commission of Racial Justice (SCRJ) and Leaders Unlocked with students completing the SCRJ annual survey and informing a college action plan
- A new framework of High Performing Teams (HPT) with characteristics and behaviours to support an inclusive and high performing college

The implementation of 'unconscious bias' training, as part of a package of building the EDI skills of staff, sessions on integrating a Black Curriculum and the roll out of a Black Leadership Programme prior to this had however variable impact and highlighted the amount of work we needed to do. Our intentions were good and whilst we got some things right, we also got a lot wrong. Our learnings informed the work to come; a particular and determined approach to focus on the behaviours we need to deliver change.

It was important to develop the skills and abilities of all our managers and to ensure our approach considered all aspects of operational life to support this development. The impact on learners is key but so is the impact on staff and our stakeholders.

Engaging the 10 Point Plan – a timeline

In **September 2021**, further to affiliation with BLG, we recruited a number of BAME staff for our 'induction' events which were held across October. These were events that involved a good representation of BAME staff across areas, our directors, governors and all members of our Senior Leadership Team. The events, facilitated by BLG, provided an opportunity for shared stories and, using the 10 Point Plan, shaping the areas for action.

The Senior Leadership Team protected time to discuss and agree the priorities for action, settling on 4 strands of activity: an inclusive curriculum, professional development; staff recruitment and optics and messaging.

"The two together gave us a rich framework to take into teams and we endeavoured to use it as a way of developing staff and managers within the organisation; ultimately presenting a positive view of how we want to work together and with our students".

A decision to work with both the BLG SALT framework, AND the HPT framework was made; there being a clear link between both with characteristics and behaviours to be encouraged. This was shared with all staff.

"It appeared that in general attendees and (perhaps more importantly senior leadership members) wanted to see a difference and change...however, I guess "time will tell!"

"I really found the sessions insightful and for the very first time, it felt that my experience at BMet had been heard by those who needed to hear it."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the session- in particular the sharing of lived in experiences. I thought this was extremely powerful and needed. I think we need to engage more members of the college (at all levels) in sessions like these."

Characteristics	Self Esteem - Personal Growth Plan - Solutions Focused - Respect for differences - Mutual Trust Attention to detail and priorities - Power to make decisions - Working towards Common Goals - Open Communication - Involvement of everyone	
Behaviours	Anti-Racism SALT Framework (Shared, Ambitious, Lively and True) Behaviours	
Empathetic Professional Collaborative Purposeful/Proactive Accountable/Responsible Clear / open / honest / transparent Supportive / encouraging / understanding Self-aware/reflective Flexible/Adaptable Taking the initiative	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column;"> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">SHARED</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of everyone Share lived experience Hear opposing views Look out for vulnerability Develop compassion Exchange inspirational stories </div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">LIVELY</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engender optimism Instil urgency Channel passion and discord Believe mistakes can be overcome Find creative solutions Have Soul </div>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column;"> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Ambitious</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on opportunities Embrace new insights Secure authority Take effective action Call out inertia Build resilience </div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">TRUE</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find the facts Speak truth to power Learn from honest feedback Share intellectual capital Deliver tangible impact Demonstrate integrity </div>

In **November 2021** - Managers and leaders participated in a HPT session where characteristics and behaviours were explored and agreed. Our managers' profiles were plotted on the SALT framework (lots in lively and true and less in shared and ambitious!) and discussions informed how we might want to work and take forward activities.

In **December 2021** a Leaders Unlocked event gave staff alongside students an opportunity to explore racial equality and develop tangible recommendations for the college to take forward. In January 2022 staff reps from across teams attended a 10-point plan briefing to take back to departments. Directors Development and Managers Q&A sessions were held to develop managers and leaders' confidence to introduce our strands of activity and the HPT/SALT framework. Managers were encouraged to practise how they would deliver their message their teams. See personal accounts.

From **February 2022** managers cascaded through their direct reports and rolled out to teams. In the same month the first of our student and staff 'Equalitea and talks' for Race Equality Week were launched with the 10-point plan and anti-racism on the menu for discussion.

Alongside these activities our Principal bulletins, our Vice Principal weekly newsletters and Sharepoint news posts kept staff informed of our work. All staff were expected to complete an online MIE Anti-Racism for Educators training course and for the first time adopt a D&I objective in their professional development plan for the year. We looped in the work of BRAP and the blueprint for Birmingham to become an anti-racist city and commenced our work with Birmingham Race Impact Group.

In **March 2022** – Leaders and Managers were assigned Action Learning Sets as a mechanism to collaborate, share, and problem solve, and to hone their skills.

In June 2022 we also took a lead on a new Race Equality Steering Group for Colleges West Midlands. Where colleges shared their data to develop collective actions to take forward.

In **December 2022** a new SCRJ student survey focussed on experience of college life. Recommendations by students taken forward and embedded in the college action plan.

In the **Spring term of 2023** our BAME staff engaged with the BLG lived experience project which involved a survey and optional in-depth interviews. The report published by BLG included recommendations that were shared with governors and informed our college action plan.

A personal account – a Professional Services Manager’s experience

Early in 2022 the 3 managers in our area co-facilitated a session with the team. Individuals had already undertaken the MIE training independently and we came together to visit some key touch points in the training. We worked in pairs and we all agreed this had given us a really good introduction into race equality and made us think beyond obvious forms of discrimination to more subtle things and to the systems that disadvantage people. As a team we built on this with the directed day in CPD week in June. One manager used her message to encourage team members to explore what anti-racism means, how comfortable they are and why it is important. We looked at the wider context of social inclusion, the business imperative and individual benefits. Team members discussed “why now?” including external drivers of Brexit and the labour shortage, World Skills Report, Covid pandemic and its disproportionate impact, the murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter, the local murder of Dea-John Reid, the BFELG Group Open Letter and College’s affiliation with BLG. We used the shared experiences video that had been created by BAME staff to enhance understanding and colleagues spoke about what resonated with them. Another manager introduced the behaviours and characteristics of HPT and SALT and we had fun mapping ourselves on the SALT quadrant reflecting on our natural propensity for our ‘good’ and ‘bad’ days. We then looked at how we could use our learnings to take us forward. It led to us setting personal goals on how we can develop more inclusive habits but also on the objectives we set for what we are trying to achieve as a team.

A personal account - A Curriculum Departmental Manager’s experience

The focus on anti-racism, HPT/SALT has had a huge impact on me and how I work. Before, I was one of those people - I’ve used the term “I’m not racist, I’ve got black friends etc” and I’ve really learnt so much. I’ve an understanding of what white privilege is, I’ve learnt that whilst we can empathise we cannot truly appreciate others’ experiences. I have sought out resources, reading, films and documentaries to increase my understanding. I’ve wanted to find out more. And these things have struck a chord. I wouldn’t have sought this out without our training. With the framework of behaviours it’s really made me develop an empathetic approach and we are working much more collaboratively. It’s having an appreciation of other people and their priorities and constraints too. Its about pulling together and having each others’ back. For my own SALT profile – it was pretty accurate – and I have moved more to shared over time and this has influenced the conversations and discussions we have as a team. There’s certainly been a shift and an awareness and appreciation of others – the good and bad days. This has meant that I’m using a different approach, different language with my team and it works its way through to students and curriculum. We are having really honest conversations with our students and encouraging them to have a voice.

2022-2023 – Keeping momentum through team and personal objectives, staff development, College West Midlands Race Equality workstreams, Action Learning Sets and Professional Learning Communities. The introduction of Personal Journals for staff which replaced the college’s Professional Development Review system signalled a radical change in approach

Strands of Activity

It was important that the four strands of activity we chose had SALT and HPT behaviours at their heart. For example

Integrating into professional development - sharing practice events, sharing lived experiences (e.g "call me by my name" sessions), taking conversational approaches and engendering optimism with a range of external speakers.

Inclusive Curriculum - collaboration and shared practice key with Professional Learning Communities established and curriculum areas working together to develop banks of materials on positive contributions BAME people.

Staff recruitment - working group set up engaging volunteers with a range of views to look at how we improve workforce diversity and recruitment experiences for applicants and new recruits, developing a recruitment journey from an anti-racist perspective.

Optics and messaging - a renewed effort to improve visual representation and positive optics and also improve the way we communicate our messages - using honesty and transparency. The HPT framework supported a BMet Communicates guide and Make Meetings Matter guide.

Impact

There has been some real tangible impact from the work we have done in the last couple of years and there are also the aspects that you can 'feel' but are difficult to measure – for example we have noticed that HPT language was quite quickly adopted with colleagues and it has been increasingly used to call others out or to illustrate high performing or inclusive ways of working.

- Anti-racism is firmly on the agenda. There is a clear area of focus and shared experiences have led to an increase in understanding with a by-product of advancing inclusion for other groups.
- We have much more collaborative working across teams, departments and sites. Our consultation mechanisms are also enabling staff to influence organisational development fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusion. "Listening to" and "consulting staff" was noted as one of the top 5 themes of things for 'One thing to CONTINUE' (staff survey 2023 – 420 responses). "I've really felt this year that I have been listened to more and this has really given me the confidence to speak up"
- The full staff survey held in September 23 highlighted improvements from the previous survey with 86% of respondents saying "I am proud to be a member of staff at BMet" (+3% from 2022) and 75% stating "I feel valued at work"; and 90% that "BMet is a diverse and inclusive organisation" (+4% from 2022).
- The staff recruitment project is improving representation. We have improved the ethnic diversity of our workforce (+4% from 2022 to 2023) and our tracking of applicants shows that we are reaching a diverse talent pool with our Asian candidates having the highest rate of being shortlisted for further consideration.
- For student achievement and ethnicity, the differential between highest and lowest achievers has decreased from 11.8% in 21/22 to 9.1% in 22/23 (*where there are 100 students or more). We have a target that all groups will be within 5% of the college average.

In 2023 our Ofsted inspection report noted "*Learners and apprentices find college campuses to be safe and respectful environments, which are inclusive and welcoming. Leaders and managers have created a culture that promotes diversity and inclusivity. Leaders underpin this with the widely understood 'ready, respect, safe' code of conduct. Staff encourage learners and apprentices to be tolerant of different views. Consequently, learners and apprentices are respectful and polite to their peers, teachers and visitors*"

Specific examples on BMet's Inclusive Journey toward becoming an Anti Racist College Sway

Research

The Contact Center resolved to select an anti-racism/ equality and diversity quote each week and get it published in the VP weekly briefing. One member of the team ensured it was done every week and that the whole team was engaged.

As a result, the team experienced a lot of interaction with staff from across the college, a growth in knowledge of how important being an anti racist organisation was for many people and an increase in confidence talking about it with others.

The contact centre also committed to learning new skills that would increase their ability to support learners who's first language was not English.

The team worked with the college's ESOL department to understand more fully the sorts of issues that learners experience. As a result the team have further developed their communication techniques, to include adjustments to the pace of conversations, exploring the use of different words and pronunciations and the use of someone's name. The team also created a google translate user guide for use by all staff which has been particularly helpful during the enrolment process.

As a result the team have a greater understanding of the issues faced by learners and increased sense of satisfaction from being able to support more effectively.

Bespoke Additions

The Employability team responsible for developing a number of short term Sector Based Work Academy Programmes resolved to integrate an additional bespoke module into their training programmes. The module was designed to encourage debates and sharing of experiences in relation to employers and the work place, links with employment law and cultural difference. A key feature of the programme is to illustrate how cultural differences can amount to a transferrable skills that can be taken into the work place.

Delivering the module was a challenge because of the short term nature of the courses and time required to nurture the kind of safe space to enable such sharing. The module is being kept under review to see how it can be further developed.

The team have felt a greater sense of being empowered and able to drive positive change that supports the learner experience.

Active listening

The Marketing team committed to organising an event for learners to share their views on how racism could be tackled.

One outcome from the listening exercise was holding a culture awareness day in the college which was enjoyed by staff and students alike.

That single event has led to a number of such events being held (and very much enjoyed) across the college.

It has also generated a great sense of pride in seeing the impact on the confidence of learners in both event organising and acknowledging the riches and benefits of difference and diversity.



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Contact Details

To affiliate or for further information,
please email exec@blackleadershipgroup.com