

Youth Futures Foundation

Call for Proposals

REA: What works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?

1. Introduction

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment. We want to remove the disparities in employment outcomes that exist for young people facing the greatest challenges, and to help them find and keep good quality jobs. We do this by undertaking high quality evaluations, building and sharing the evidence of what works, driving evidence-based change in policy and working with employers and practitioners to improve practice.

Youth Futures was set up with a particular focus on the findings of the Race Disparity Audit in 2017. While our organisational scope is broader than this, addressing the employment disparities that prevail for young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds is a key priority.

As part of this commitment, we have recently released further funding to our flagship [Connected Futures](#) programme to develop partnerships in places where youth unemployment is particularly high for those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. Our partners in these areas will work closely with local employers to create pathways into employment for young people. To help them do this, we want to understand the most effective approaches for engaging employers and promoting uptake of inclusive employment practices.

For this project, we are seeking to commission a rapid evidence assessment (REA) to explore what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with a particular focus on young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. The REA should also identify any key gaps in the evidence that need to be addressed through further primary research.

The research team will undertake an initial scoping/mapping exercise prior to conducting the REA to identify the extent, nature and quality of the available literature. As part of this exercise, the research team will also explore the extent to which behavioural insights literature can provide insights around promising / effective approaches for engaging employers to take action for EDI. If the mapping suggests that this is a helpful avenue to explore, then we reserve the right to extend the commission to conduct an additional REA focused on behavioural insights literature.

We are open to proposals *either* from a team at a single organisation *or* from two or more organisations working in partnership.

2. Context

Ethnic disparities and racial discrimination in the workplace

Research from Youth Futures indicates that young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds face particular barriers to employment, including racial discrimination in the workplace. Recent analysis demonstrates that, with the exception of the “white and Asian” ethnic group, unemployment rates¹ in England are higher for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds than for White British young people (Youth Futures, Unpublished)². The NEET (not in education, employment or training) rate for black Caribbean young people (25%) is over double that of white British (11%) young people, and NEET rates are higher for those from white and black Caribbean (15%), Pakistani (14%), other Asian (12%), and black African (12%) backgrounds when compared to white British young people.

Our recent survey of 3,250 young people in England from minoritised ethnic backgrounds found that almost half (48%) had experienced some level of prejudice and discrimination at work (Youth Futures, 2024). The majority (79%) did not report this to their employer, since they did not think it would make a difference. As a result of experiencing discrimination, almost three-quarters of respondents were motivated to look for new opportunities at other companies (73%) or even industries (71%). These findings build on a previous survey of 2,296 young people, which identified prejudice and discrimination based on ethnicity as a key barrier to success in the workplace (Youth Futures, 2022a). Additionally, a poll of 1,750 black and minority ethnic employees conducted by the TUC (2022) found that two in five had experienced some form of racism at work in the last five years, with young people aged 18-24 more likely to say they had experienced racial harassment in the workplace.

Engaging employers

Employers have an integral role to play in addressing ethnic disparities and racial discrimination in the workplace. Recognising this, a number of organisations have developed guidance, resources and initiatives to support and engage employers. Key examples include the McGregor-Smith Review (McGregor-Smith, 2017); various resources on the Business in the Community (BITC) website³; Action for Race Equality's Inclusive Employers Toolkit (GLA, 2020) and Positive Action Guide for London's Chief Executives (Action for Race Equality, 2023); and guidance from the UK government on positive action in the workplace (UK Government, 2023). Organisations such as CIPD⁴ and ACAS⁵ have also published guidance for employers to promote EDI in their workforces. When it comes to supporting young people specifically, Youth Futures has conducted two REAs on what works to recruit (Youth Futures, 2022b) and retain (Youth

¹ Defined as those who are not employed, but are seeking work.

² Data from the Adult Population Survey (APS) was pooled for 3 years (Jan 2020 to Dec 2022) in order to generate high enough sample sizes to allow for detailed analysis by ethnicity.

³ See: [Race - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](https://bitc.org.uk)

⁴ See: [Inclusive recruitment: Guide for employers | CIPD](#)

⁵ See: [What they are - Equality, diversity and inclusion - Acas](#)



Futures, 2022c) young people facing disadvantage, both of which were published alongside practical guidance for employers.

Despite these efforts, existing evidence suggests that employer engagement and action on this agenda is inconsistent (see McGregor Smith, 2017; CIPD, 2022a; BITC, 2023; Kerr, 2023; Crook, 2024). A recent report from CIPD (2022b) concludes that *“although there are pockets of good practice, the proportion of organisations implementing inclusive people management practices and focusing on removing inequalities faced by people with certain personal characteristics is low.”*

Employers themselves also cite barriers to taking action to improve EDI. A recent report by the government's Inclusion at Work Panel (2024) found that employers reported a range of barriers to implementing effective EDI practice. Over a quarter (28%) of employers who responded to CIPD's Inclusion at Work Survey said that managers are not given the time and resources to foster an inclusive and diverse team, and only half (51%) believed that managers felt confident to improve equality and diversity in their teams (CIPD, 2022b). When it comes to recruiting young people more broadly, our own survey with employers found that barriers ranged from a lack of advice and support (14%) to negative perceptions of young people – for example, that there aren't enough young people with the skills they need (23%) or that young people wouldn't fit at their organisation (23%) (Youth Futures, 2023).

Despite these findings, there is evidence to suggest that employers are open to engaging with EDI initiatives. CIPD's Inclusion at Work Survey found that over three-quarters (78%) of employers think leaders understand how an inclusive workplace and diverse workforce can benefit the organisation (CIPD, 2022b), while our own research with employers suggests that they recognise the wider benefits of hiring more young people from marginalised groups (Youth Futures, 2023).

The need for research

The 2021 Census shows that a quarter of England's future workforce will soon come from an ethnic minority background (Youth Futures, 2024). It is imperative that we dismantle the barriers that can prevent these young people from reaching their full potential, and employers have a key role to play in this.

Youth Futures is committed to working proactively with employers to drive best practice on the ground. We want to understand how Youth Futures, our partners, and others working in this space can most effectively engage with employers to promote good practice and encourage engagement with the evidence, resources and guidance we produce. Ultimately, this will help to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds, including those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.



3. Project overview

Aims

The overarching aim of this REA is to explore and synthesise existing evidence on what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The findings from this REA will support the work taking place through our Connected Futures programme with a focus on removing barriers to employment for young people from Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. The research should identify examples of effective approaches and/or key success factors which will help Youth Futures, our partners, and others working in this space to effectively engage with employers to promote good practice. It should also identify any key evidence gaps which need to be addressed through further primary research. We are planning to commission further primary research with employers in our Connected Futures expansion areas later this year.

Themes and scope

The review should focus on **what works to promote employer action and behaviour change**, rather than on the effectiveness of specific EDI interventions in improving diversity and addressing discrimination. For example, evidence around the effectiveness of name-blind recruitment, diverse interview panels, or internal EDI policies would be out of scope – what is in scope is *what makes employers more likely to adopt these practices*. Specific EDI initiatives may be relevant where they in themselves promote employer action; for example, evidence which indicates that asking employers to make public commitments or to publish EDI data prompts them to act on equality, diversity and inclusion.

We recognise from our previous evidence reviews on what works to recruit and retain young people that evidence specific to young people (aged 16-24), and particularly those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, is limited. Therefore, while we would like to explore any available evidence for this group, we anticipate that the review will need to include evidence related to all working age adults. We are also interested in any transferable learning around what works to engage employers with wider EDI initiatives or to address prejudice or discrimination against marginalised groups (for example, based on gender or mental health).

If literature related specifically to employer engagement with EDI is limited, then we are also open to exploring evidence around what works to promote changes in employer behaviours in other areas – for example, in relation to employee wellbeing. We are also interested in whether behavioural insights studies and literature may offer relevant insights – for example, the ReAct Partnership has published guidance on behavioural insights in employment services (Subosa, Mansour and Wilson, 2022), and the Behavioural Insights Team⁶ has published several reports on how behavioural insights can be applied in the workplace.

⁶ [The Behavioural Insights Team \(bi.team\)](https://www.bi.team/)



Research questions

Main question:

What does existing evidence tell us about what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?

Sub-questions:

- 1) What works to engage employers to:
 - a) implement equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in relation to recruitment, retention and progression?
 - b) take action to support young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds specifically, in relation to recruitment, retention and progression?
 - c) take action to tackle prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, particularly racial discrimination against young people?
- 2) What, if anything, can we learn from evidence around what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in other areas – for example, in relation to employee wellbeing?
- 3) What would behavioural insights literature suggest about promising / effective approaches for promoting employer action and behaviour change in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)?

Across these sub-questions, researchers should consider:

- What previous approaches have been successful, and why? How was this success measured and evidenced?
- What previous approaches have been less successful, and why?
- What key roles and employer characteristics contribute to employer action and behaviour change?
- What key factors positively (and negatively) impact employer action and behaviour? To what extent do employer characteristics such as size, sector and location play a role?
- What approaches and factors lead employers to embed positive practice into their organisations long-term, as opposed to short-term engagement?
- What is the strength and quality of the evidence?
- What are the evidence gaps?



Method

The main research method for this project is a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of relevant literature.

The research team will need to undertake an initial scoping/mapping exercise prior to conducting the REA in order to identify the extent, nature and quality of the available literature against each of the three sub-questions. We anticipate that a systematic approach will be appropriate but are open to alternatives that can capture a useful range of literature. During the scoping phase, researchers should assess:

- The quality of available studies. We anticipate that there will be a wealth of grey literature in this area of variable quality. The research team will need to decide on clear and explicit criteria for assessing methodological quality, and then conduct an initial assessment of the extent of the literature available against these quality criteria. This will feed into the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria for the REA, and also help us to understand the overall quality of the evidence that is currently guiding practice.
- The extent to which sub-question 1 can be comprehensively answered with the available evidence, and how far we will need to rely on transferable learnings from other areas (sub-question 2). Researchers should set out explicitly which other areas we may draw transferable learnings from, and any they would consider to be out of scope.
- The extent and quality of the literature relevant to sub-question 3, and whether this can be encompassed within the proposed scope of this research.

As well as scoping out the available literature, researchers are encouraged to conduct either a small number of interviews or a focus group with expert stakeholders to explore their approaches to engaging with employers, how successful these approaches have been, and any evidence they use to inform their approaches. We are keen for the research organisation to suggest contacts that they would interview, but can also support with connections to organisations on our advisory group (see below).

Following the scoping/mapping phase, researchers will meet with the team at Youth Futures to discuss their findings and proposed approach for taking the research forward. If the scoping exercise suggests that there is sufficient literature to justify a separate REA on sub-question 3, Youth Futures will consider how best to commission this.

Following this conversation, researchers will need to develop a clear review protocol. This should set out:

- Finalised research questions and sub-questions



- Definitions of key categories and themes
- Approach to searching, screening and selecting the literature
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria, including how quality and relevance of the literature will be assessed
- How findings will be analysed and synthesised

Studies for inclusion

Studies for inclusion are largely to be determined during the scoping stage (see above). However, we initially propose including any available systematic reviews, as well as evaluations of individual programmes and individual research studies of sufficient quality. We expect that the review will prioritise evaluation evidence of Level 3 and above (Puttick and Ludlow, 2013) and high quality, peer reviewed qualitative studies. We suggest excluding grey literature outside of these parameters (for example, good practice guidance and toolkits), since these are unlikely to meet the quality criteria.

We anticipate that the review will include international studies owing to this being a relatively under-researched policy area in the UK. However, the project will need a rationale for the inclusion of international studies and an approach to using these to inform commentary on the English case. For example, researchers should consider how findings from different policy frameworks, social and cultural contexts, and labour market conditions can usefully be compared, what assumptions are required in order to make such comparisons valid, and what caveats should be drawn.

Projects in our existing portfolio which may be helpful to refer to for this project include:

- Our [recently published survey](#) on discrimination experienced by ethnically minoritised young people in the workplace.
- Our previous evidence reviews, in partnership with CIPD and the Centre for Evidence Based Management, on what works to [recruit](#) and [retain](#) young people facing disadvantage.
- Our [work with Regenerate](#) to understand the views and experiences of employers when it comes to recruiting young people experiencing marginalisation.

Advisory group

Throughout the project, researchers will consult with an advisory group of experts convened by Youth Futures. The advisory group will be available to participate in expert interviews/a focus group if required, and will review and comment on key project outputs, including from the initial scoping exercise. Findings should also be presented to the advisory group at the interim and final reporting stage.



4. Contractor requirements, deliverables, schedule and budget

Contractor requirements

The research team for this project should have:

- Experience of and expertise in systematic literature reviewing and/or rapid evidence assessments.
- Expertise in using research to examine equalities issues in relation to employment. Relevant experience around ethnic disparities would be desirable.
- Knowledge of youth employment issues or policies, particularly in relation to young people who face marginalisation in the labour market.
- A clear and explicit commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We are open to proposals either from a team at a single organisation that brings together the relevant skills and experience, or from two or more organisations working in partnership. In the latter case, the project proposal should include details of arrangements for collaboration between partners.

Deliverables

The research team will deliver the following outputs:

- A short inception report outlining their approach and strategy for conducting the scoping/mapping stage of this work.
- A short summary report and presentation following the evidence scoping / mapping exercise, outlining the key findings and proposed approach and rationale for taking the research forwards.
- A search strategy and review protocol.
- An interim report and presentation.
- A final report and presentation.

The final project report will be peer reviewed by an external expert or experts. The second draft of a report is normally sent to peer reviewers. Additional interim and informal outputs may be shared with Youth Futures throughout the project.

Representatives from the contracted organisation will also attend:

- An inception meeting with Youth Futures staff.
- A preliminary meeting at the beginning of each phase with Youth Futures staff.
- Fortnightly check-in meetings with Youth Futures.



Timescales

We would expect this project to be completed by the following timescales and outputs:

Date	Activities and outputs
w/b 24 th June 2024	Inception meeting
w/b 1 st July 2024	Inception report
w/b 12 th August 2024	Scoping/mapping report and presentation
w/b 26 th August 2024	Search strategy and review protocol
w/b 28 th October 2024	Interim report and presentation
w/b 25 th November 2024	First draft of final report
w/b 6 th January 2025	Second draft of final report
w/b 20 th January 2025	Final report for publication

Budget

The total budget for this work is £50,000.

5. Submitting a proposal

Key dates

The schedule for submitting a proposal is:

Call for Proposals issued: Thursday 2nd May 2024

Deadline for submission of questions: Friday 17th May 2024

Question responses circulated: Thursday 23rd May 2024

Proposal submission deadline: Thursday 30th May 2024

Interviews: W/b 10th June 2024

Start date: W/b 17th June 2024

Proposal requirements

Please submit a short (c. 8pp) proposal, outlining:

- Your understanding of the project
- Your research design, approach, and methods. Your preferred approach, or different options with different budget implications
- A timeline / Gantt chart for deliverables



- Your appraisal of the challenges likely to arise in this research including any risks and mitigations. This could include a formal risk register
- At least one example of a relevant project undertaken previously by your organisation *and/or* including at least one of your team leads
- Short biographies of all team members, their experience and role within the project
- Contact details of two referees who have commissioned similar work from you
- Your budget estimate and a full budget breakdown (including the daily rate for different staff leading different elements). Youth Futures Foundation will award the successful research organisation[s] a grant to carry out the research and produce final outputs. To the extent that the research organisation[s] believe[s] it is necessary to charge VAT on the Grant Award, this amount will **be inclusive of VAT**.
- Contact details for the project lead, and for all team members.

In addition to your response, we would like you to attach the following policies for every organisation involved in the bid:

- Data protection and GDPR
- Safeguarding

Please note that value for money is a key criterion in the assessment of bids. Please submit your proposal to research@youthfuturesfoundation.org by 12:00 on **Thursday 30th May 2024**.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the tender in more depth, please email research@youthfuturesfoundation.org and use the title '**REA: EMPLOYER ACTION AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**' in your email heading.



APPENDIX 1 – QUALITY CRITERIA

Quality criteria

Category	Criteria	Score
Expertise and experience (30%)	a) Recent and/or extensive track record of systematic literature reviewing and/or rapid evidence assessments.	0 - Totally fails to meet the requirement - information not available
	b) Expertise in using research to examine equalities issues in relation to employment.	
	c) Knowledge of youth employment issues or policies, particularly in relation to young people who face marginalisation in the labour market.	1 - Meets some of the requirements - limited supporting information
	d) A clear and explicit commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).	
Methodology and approach (35%)	a) A clear research framework that fully meets the project requirements.	2 - Meets some of the requirements - reasonable explanation
	b) High quality, appropriate data collection and analysis methodologies that can fully answer the research questions.	
	c) A plan to facilitate and capture policy and practice learning and deliver high-quality, appropriate outputs that can be shared with a variety of research, policy and practice audiences.	3 - Mostly meets the requirements - good explanation, some evidence
Project Management, data security and risk mitigations (15%)	a) A clear project timeline with well-phased deliverables and milestones, supported by strong project management protocols.	4 - Fully meets the requirements - detailed explanation and evidence
	b) Robust policies and procedures for collecting and storing personal data from participants. Robust data protection/GDPR policies, procedures and (where possible) industry standards (such as ISO 27001). Experience of supporting a variety of organisations to comply with data protection law.	
	c) Sensitivity to potential project risks and clear strategies to support the mitigation of these.	5 - Exceeds requirements - extensive explanation and evidence
Costings (20%)	a) A clearly costed proposal that demonstrates high quality delivery.	
	b) High quality processes, including ensuring sufficient time for analysis and sufficient staff seniority and time to effectively quality assure all outputs.	
	c) Proposed costings demonstrate value for money (number of research days, quantity and quality of outputs, appropriateness of proposed team composition and management).	



APPENDIX 2 – DETAILED CONTEXT

Racial discrimination in the workplace

In 2017, the McGregor-Smith Review on race in the workplace concluded that for those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds “*there is discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career*” (McGregor-Smith, 2017). The review found that adults from minoritised ethnic backgrounds are under-represented in higher-paid occupations and over-represented in lower-paid occupations; are less likely to be working in jobs aligned with their skills and qualifications; and are underrepresented in leadership positions. It also uncovered evidence of how prejudice, discrimination and exclusionary practices can act as barriers to entering and progressing in work.

Several other studies have demonstrated the impact of racial discrimination in the workplace. For example, studies detailing how candidates are discriminated against during the hiring process on the basis of their names have led to initiatives such as ‘name blind recruitment’ (McGregor-Smith, 2017). One study found that job applicants from a minoritised ethnic background have to send 60% more applications than white British candidates to get a positive response (Centre for Social Investigation, 2019). This study found that candidates from black and South Asian backgrounds faced particularly high levels of discrimination.

Survey research has also uncovered high levels of racial discrimination in the workplace. Business in the Community (BITC)’s 2021 Race at Work Survey found that 25% of employees from ethnically minoritised backgrounds had witnessed or experienced racial harassment or bullying from managers (BITC, 2021). A poll of 1,750 black and minority ethnic employees conducted by the TUC found that two in five had experienced some form of racism at work in the last five years (TUC, 2022). Of these, just 19 per cent reported the most recent incident to their employer, and, in the majority of cases, this did not lead to action being taken to prevent further harassment. The survey also found that young people (aged 18-24) were more likely to say they had experienced racial harassment in the workplace.

Youth Futures recently published findings from a survey of 3,250 young people in England from minoritised ethnic backgrounds (Youth Futures, 2024). Almost half (48%) of respondents said they had experienced some level of prejudice and discrimination at work. The majority (79%) did not report this, since they did not think it would make a difference. As a result of experiencing discrimination, almost three-quarters of respondents were motivated to look for new opportunities at other companies (73%) or even industries (71%). These findings build on a previous survey of 2,296 young people conducted by Youth Futures, which identified prejudice and discrimination based on ethnicity as a key barrier to success in the workplace (Youth Futures, 2022a).



Engaging employers

Employers have an integral role to play in addressing ethnic disparities and racial discrimination in the workplace. Recognising this, a number of organisations have developed guidance, resources and initiatives to support and engage employers. These include:

- **The McGregor-Smith review** (McGregor-Smith, 2017) makes a range of practical recommendations for employers and includes a 'roadmap to success' for senior executives to help them enact these recommendations.
- **Business in the Community (BITC)**⁷ has published a range of reports and guides for employers. BITC also developed the Race at Work Charter, which asks employers to commit to seven calls to action to improve equality of opportunity in the workplace. Most of these calls to action reflect the recommendations of the McGregor-Smith Review.
- **Action for Race Equality** has published an Inclusive Employers Toolkit in collaboration with the Greater London Authority (GLA, 2020) and a Positive Action Guide for London's Chief Executives (Action for Race Equality, 2023) to help senior leaders with hiring, retention and progression of young black men.
- **The UK government** has recently published guidance for positive action in the workplace (UK Government, 2023), which explains how employers can use positive action to support those with protected characteristics while remaining compliant with equalities legislation.

Organisations such as CIPD⁸ and ACAS⁹ have also published guidance for employers to promote EDI in their workforces more generally. When it comes to supporting young people specifically, Youth Futures has conducted two REAs on what works to recruit (Youth Futures, 2022b) and retain (Youth Futures, 2022c) young people facing disadvantage, both of which were published alongside practical guidance for employers.

However, organisations working to tackle ethnic disparities and racism in the workplace (as well as to promote EDI more broadly) have noted that employers can be challenging to engage. Specific issues raised include:

- A perceived lack of buy-in from senior leaders and chief executives (McGregor-Smith, 2017; Crook, 2024)
- Unwillingness or discomfort when it comes to having open conversations about race (Kerr, 2023; Crook, 2024)

⁷ See: [Race - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](https://www.bitc.org.uk/race-business-in-the-community)

⁸ See: [Inclusive recruitment: Guide for employers | CIPD](https://www.cipd.com/resources/research-and-insights/articles-topics/inclusive-recruitment-guide-for-employers)

⁹ See: [What they are - Equality, diversity and inclusion - Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion)



- Poor or limited data capture around ethnicity – including around recruitment, retention, pay and progression – or a failure to publish this data (McGregor Smith, 2017; CIPD, 2022a; Crook, 2024)

BITC conducts annual surveys of employers who have signed its Race at Work Charter to assess their progress its commitments. Their most recent survey finds that while employers have made progress against several commitments since the charter launched in 2018, there is still some way to go; for example, just over half of those surveyed (53%) had targets to increase the racial diversity of their board or senior teams, 44% published their ethnicity pay gaps, and just 25% had reviewed their bullying and harassment policies (BITC, 2023).

When it comes to EDI more broadly, the latest Inclusion at Work Survey by CIPD highlights similar issues around employer engagement (CIPD, 2022b). Notably, just 30% of employers surveyed said that their senior leaders were completely committed to having a diverse workforce, and just 36% said that senior leaders are completely committed to having an inclusive workplace. Over a third (36%) of employers said that their organisation is not planning to focus on any inclusion and diversity areas in the next five years. The report concludes that *“although there are pockets of good practice, the proportion of organisations implementing inclusive people management practices and focusing on removing inequalities faced by people with certain personal characteristics is low.”*

Employers themselves also cite barriers to taking action to improve EDI. A recent report by the government's Inclusion at Work Panel found that employers reported a range of barriers to implementing effective EDI practice, including the size of the organisation and resources available, limited time to test new ideas, a lack of accessible data on the efficacy of different initiatives, and a lack of confidence in navigating equalities legislation (Inclusion at Work Panel, 2024). Over a quarter (28%) of employers who responded to CIPD's Inclusion at Work Survey said that managers are not given the time and resources to foster an inclusive and diverse team, and only half (51%) believed that managers felt confident to improve equality and diversity in their teams (CIPD, 2022b). In just under half of organisations (46%), inclusion and diversity was seen to take a back seat to operational imperatives. When it comes to recruiting young people more broadly, our own survey with employers found that, when asked why they hadn't recruited more young people, barriers ranged from a lack of advice and support (14%) to negative perceptions of young people – for example, that there aren't enough young people with the skills they need (23%) or that young people wouldn't fit at their organisation (23%) (Youth Futures, 2023).

Despite these findings, there is evidence to suggest that employers are open to engaging with EDI initiatives. CIPD's Inclusion at Work Survey found that over three-quarters of employers (78%) think leaders understand how an inclusive workplace and diverse workforce can benefit the organisation (CIPD, 2022b). Our own research with



employers suggests that employers recognise the wider benefits of hiring more young people from marginalised groups, such as bringing new ways of thinking and innovation; changes to societal mindset and prejudices; and helping to address skills gaps (Youth Futures, 2023). The McGregor-Smith Review includes several case studies of employers who are proactively working to address ethnic disparities in the workplace (McGregor-Smith, 2017). The number of signatories to BITC's Race at Work Charter is increasing year on year, and the proportion of employers meeting several of the charter's commitments is increasing (BITC, 2023). This demonstrates that there is scope to engage with employers to promote uptake of good practice.

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