



BLI STUDY – SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS

Submitted to

Black Leadership Initiative

by

CSK Strategies Ltd

Registered Address

CSK Strategies Ltd

84 Church Lane

Handsworth

Birmingham, B20 2ES

Tel 0121 551 7596

Fax 0121 523 3553

Email: info@csk-strategies.co.uk



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 3

Section One: Introduction 5

Section Two: Interviewees and their Experience of BLI 6

Section Three: Benefits of Participation in BLI Programmes.....7

Section Four: Career Progression of Participants 12

Section Five: Significance of BLI Participation in Career Progression..... 14

Section Six: Benefit of BLI Participation to Employers and Colleagues.....15

Section Seven: Pointers for Continuous Improvement..... 17

Section Eight: Conclusions 19

Executive Summary

The Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) commissioned this survey to provide an in-depth picture of the experiences of participants and the benefits they gained from their involvement in the mentoring, secondment and career development opportunities provided by the BLI. In particular, the BLI wanted to know the extent to which their programmes had contributed to the career development of participants.

The survey also identified ways in which the BLI programmes benefit colleges and, by implication, why they should be supported by post 16 providers and funders.

In specific terms, the career progression of BLI participants has been extremely positive. Ten of the thirteen people who were interviewed for this study have progressed in their careers since being involved with the BLI, 77% of the total. Three people progressed from lecturer posts into management, while seven progressed within the management sphere. Two interviewees moved from subject-specific management posts to more strategic cross-college roles. All of the interviewees said that BLI had contributed to their achievement and five said that it had contributed significantly.

The general benefit of the BLI programmes to individual participants can be demonstrated in four different ways:

i) By the support that is specific to staff from BME backgrounds as shown by the following quotes from participants:

- *There is still an issue regarding the recognition of the skills of BME staff.*
- *For BME staff, it's hard work to try to get to the top. I couldn't understand why I wasn't moving. I would still be there, but through the BLI and NBM (now the Network for Black Professionals) I learnt strategies, was kept informed, and I was given confidence.*

ii) In the personal development of staff as shown by the following quotes from participants:

- *It helped in building confidence. I realised, yes I can do it!*
- *It improved my confidence and self esteem.*
- *It was good for my confidence. Little things can have an impact. In the end I thought, go for it – don't hold back.*
- *It opened my mind to new ideas about aspirations – now I know I can aspire to better things.*

iii) In the development of the skills and knowledge of staff. For example:

- Career development skills.
- Skills specific to inspection.
- Management skills, including specific areas of management such as finance.
- Access to examples of good practice in other colleges.
- A wider understanding of the FE Sector.

iv) By the support given in the process of achieving promotion. For example:

- It was possible to apply what had been learnt at career development workshop straight away to apply for jobs and get short listed.
- A finance session helped to prove, at interview, knowledge of this aspect of management.
- Interviewers were impressed by the OFSTED shadowing experience and it could be referred to during interviews.
- Mentors helped to prepare mentees for interview and were supportive throughout the process.

The outcomes of this study illustrate the ways in which black-led programmes such as this, which are aimed at a BME client group, are successful and of benefit to individuals and organisations. There is evidence that colleges are benefiting from the work of the BLI because their BME staff are participating in a CPD programme that is preparing them for career development in the further education workforce. Interviewees have expressed their belief that, without these specifically black-led and BME-focused training opportunities, they would not feel so well prepared for promotion within the sector. The specific skills and knowledge that black staff can gain from a BLI environment cannot be accessed in mainstream training situations because of the BLI focus on BME-specific development strategies. One of these is to ensure that BME staff gain a breadth of knowledge of the FE sector, giving them experiences and aspirations across a range of curriculum and management areas.

The Black Leadership Initiative and the Network for Black Professionals now have a new relationship and are working together more closely. This partnership is supported by the people interviewed for this study and it is seen as an opportunity to revisit the communications strategy employed by both organisations. Economies of scale and improved networking could be developed with their joint resources.

As a national organisation concentrating on the CPD needs of BME staff, the BLI is clearly meeting a need within the FE Sector. The demographic profile of the workforce, in terms of race and ethnicity, is such that colleges and funding bodies need to identify the most effective approach to the professional development of the sector's BME staff. This study adds support to the success of the BLI's approach and the need for it to be supported by colleges and funding bodies.

Section One: Introduction

The Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) has been offering Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities within the post-16 sector since 2002, first as a two-year pilot funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and subsequently within the framework of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL). It was established in response to research that highlighted the under representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff in further education and, alongside this, the evidence of racism and racial harassment experience by black staff in the course of their career in FE.

An independent evaluation, commissioned by the LSC, was undertaken following the pilot phase. BLI Director, Rajinder Mann, also published a report of the BLI Pilot in May 2005. These reports gave broad analytical and statistical information about the extent of the pilot programme and its achievements. They did not look in detail at individual experiences and in particular at the career progression of participants.

The purpose of this survey, which took place in July 2006 and February 2007, was to take a more in-depth look at the experiences of BLI participants and the benefits they gained from their involvement with the mentoring, secondment and career development opportunities. In particular, the study tracks the career progression of a small number of BLI participants and asks to what extent the programme contributed to this.

It has also been possible in the course of this study to establish, the benefits to Colleges of the participation of their staff in BLI programmes. This is important information, outlined in Section Six, for the sector as it reinforces the reasons why many colleges are supporting BLI initiatives.

The BLI is also keen to learn from participants what improvements could be made to the design and delivery of their programmes. Key pointers are highlighted in Section Seven.

In recent months the management of the BLI has been transferred from CEL to the Network for Black Professionals (NBP), previously the Network for Black Managers (NBM). This survey will be useful to the new partnership that is developing between the two organisations.

Section Two: Interviewees and their Experience of BLI

Nine BLI participants were interviewed by telephone and four others completed written questionnaires. This figure represents 22% of people on the database of participants used for the purposes of this survey.

The respondents included support staff as well as lecturers and managers. The inclusion of support staff in BLI initiatives was noted and appreciated by a number of interviewees. Two people spoke of the BME staff group that had been established at their college, including both support and teaching staff. This joint approach to networking and training is one to which the BLI responded positively from its inception.

Interviewees had a range of experience of BLI initiatives. Four people had participated in more than one BLI initiative. The survey respondents had, in total, participated in 17 BLI programmes:

- Two people had attended Career Development Workshops.
- Six respondents had undertaken Shadowing with an OFSTED or ALI Inspection team.
- One had undertaken a secondment.
- Eight interviewees had been involved with the BLI Mentoring programme.

The successful Annual Conference of the BLI was also mentioned by a number of respondents. One said that she 'never misses' it, while another attended the London Conference but was not keen on travelling to the Birmingham venue. Most said that they would like to attend the Conference but had not yet been able to, mainly because of problems with cover and cost. One woman said that her college 'would never pay for that'.

Some participants had also attended seminars and training arranged by the Network for Black Managers (NBM), now known as the Network for Black Professionals (NBP) such as First Steps to Leadership. It became clear, while interviewing for this study, that many people see the BLI and the NBP as being closely related, and in their conversation they barely distinguish between the two. A number of staff had received significant support from the Network, and said that they would not be where they are today if it was not for the support of Network staff. They had accessed this support at meetings and training events, taking advantage of the relationships and networks that were formed, and they praised in particular the regular e-mail contact that the NBP provides.

Section Three: Benefits of Participation in BLI Programmes

The benefits of the specific BLI programmes, as described by participants, are outlined below under the programme headings. These include the specific experiences and skills gained at these events. In more general terms, however, participants spoke about the benefit of the BLI initiatives to black staff, taking into account their position in society and in the workforce. There was a keen awareness of the need for black-led initiatives, with a focus on the particular CPD needs of black teachers and managers, including support staff. Interviewees' comments included:

There is still an issue regarding the recognition of the skills of BME staff.

For BME staff, it's hard work to try to get to the top. I couldn't understand why I wasn't moving. I would still be there, but through the BLI and NBM (NBP) I learnt strategies, was kept informed, and I was given confidence.

There was demand for the BLI course from a number of black staff. This opened management's eyes to our existence. Now they realise they're going to need us, demographically.

The BLI has also served to develop in participants a greater sense of their personal potential, by boosting their confidence and the level of their aspirations. While the specific skills learnt during the programmes are recognised for their professional significance, it is this more personal development that is greatly appreciated by the BLI participants. The value of these intangible, immeasurable benefits can not be overemphasised, as is illustrated by the quotes below:

It helped in building confidence. I realised, yes I can do it!

It improved my confidence and self esteem.

It was good for my confidence. Little things can have an impact. In the end I thought, go for it – don't hold back.

It opened my mind to new ideas about aspirations – now I know I can aspire to better things.

I have seen my confidence levels grow throughout the year.

Comments about personal benefits were more forthcoming from interviewees who had attended career development and mentoring sessions, rather than shadowing. The shadowing exercises that had been undertaken by the interviewees for this study were oriented more towards skills and experiences that were less based on personal development, so this result is not surprising. It should, however, be borne in mind that some BLI programmes are of more benefit than others in terms of personal development. This is a factor that can contribute to the development of the BLI in terms of its marketing and relationship with personnel managers and others who fund places on BLI programmes.

The Career Development Workshop

The two interviewees who had attended the Career Development Workshop: How to Manage Your Career Effectively in May 2006 were very positive about the skills and approaches that they had learnt. They spoke specifically of the benefit of the black-led, black-focused nature of the event, in particular the access to other black leaders and the use of excellent consultants to deliver the course. Both had been promoted since the event and gave BLI significant credit for this.

This is a skills-based course, designed to help learners to progress in their careers. In this sense, the participants described the day as *'inspirational'*, *'enlightening'* and said that it *'opened my eyes'*. It helped the individuals to *'realise what skills you have'*, particularly the specific skills of BME staff, and it provided concrete lessons to be applied when seeking promotion.

In addition, participants said that it built confidence and self esteem, and added to the aspirations they already had. This personal development provides immense encouragement to BLI learners. It is the springboard for the specific career development skills that are taught during the day. It is therefore not surprising that one interview spoke about how she was *'lucky enough'* to be able to join this part of the BLI programme.

Shadowing

Six interviewees had been involved in the work shadowing opportunities provided by the BLI, five with OFSTED and one with the ALI. These were extremely intense and informative experiences, that were obviously well planned in terms of preparing the host organisations. The evidence is that all of the inspectors who allowed a BLI participant to shadow them played an extraordinary role in providing a wide range of experiences, allowing the participants to develop skills that were outside of their usual professional practice.

The participants were also briefed before the event, which they found useful although there was quite a gap of time between this event and the actual shadowing.

In terms of the activities undertaken, these were described as:

- being fully part of the team
- attending meetings
- observing classes
- being asked for feedback

Specific skills were developed as a result of:

- being actively involved in the SAR
- writing a dummy feedback form
- completing an end-of-inspection form
- being involved in the feedback meeting
- seeing how decisions were reached
- learning key areas & topics

The aspect of this shadowing that participants particularly appreciated was the willingness of the inspection teams to include and involve them in all parts of the inspection, leaving them only rarely feeling 'out of the loop'. The outcome of this was that it provided people with confidence in their own opinions and abilities. For example:

It was reassuring to find that my judgements were similar to the inspectors'.

I was fully involved. I was asked for feedback and my comments were respected.

This shadowing programme clearly serves to widened the horizons of the college staff involved, helping them to see a wider picture in terms of post-16 developments in particular, as well as developing a more in-depth understanding of the inspection process. This has been of great value to the individuals concerned, as well as their colleges, as outlined in Section Six below. The phrase most often used by interviewees was that they 'learnt a lot'.

Mentoring

The BLI's mentoring programme is a significant part of the CPD opportunities offered to BME staff. The mentoring arrangement generally lasts for between six months and one year, and is arranged between mentees selected by BLI and mentors who are experienced senior college managers, including Principals, from colleges across the country. Eight mentees were interviewed for this study.

Key to the BLI's development of a strong mentoring programme has been the training of a large number of mentors, all of whom are senior managers and Principals in Further and Adult Education. The training ensured that the mentors, most of whom are white, were able to understand their particular role in terms of mentoring black staff, and were therefore able to establish a good mentoring relationship. The success of this approach is proven in the interviews for this study in that no-one indicated that a



poor match was made between themselves and their mentor. This reflects the careful pairing that takes place, which is an important aspect of the role of the BLI in setting up the mentoring partnerships.

The mentees also attend an induction session. Interviewees said that this was useful and in particular they appreciated the input that was provided from a manager who had been involved in the programme in previous years. It was also an opportunity for people to meet fellow professionals from all over the country. It was suggested that the presence of one or two BLI mentors might also have been useful.

Following the induction, mentors were allocated to mentees some weeks later, and it was then in the mentee's hands to make contact and arrange their modus operandi. A number of people said that they found it difficult at this stage, as it felt like 'cold calling'. They would have preferred a more formal introduction. Mentees were also surprised that there was no follow-up by the BLI during the mentoring period and similarly, no wrapping-up process at the end. Two interviewees reported that they only spoke to their mentor two or three times because, on the part of either the mentor or the mentee, contact was prevented due to personal problems or a tight work schedule. It could be that monitoring and encouragement from the BLI would have put these partnerships back on track.

Mentees have described a range of valuable activities that they undertook with their mentor. These included:

- setting objectives
- helping to focus on goals.
- focusing on how to approach a new role to which the mentee had been appointed.
- working through issues with colleagues.
- support during difficult times, such as when colleagues reacted negatively to mentee's other CPD activities.
- identification of areas in which to gain more experience.
- consolidation of management skills.
- help at each stage of a recruitment & selection process.
- visits to the mentor's college to view good practice.

The value of these activities varied according to the previous experience of the mentee, but most interviewees commented on the importance of the experience in terms of aspects of personal development as well as professional skills. Interviewees spoke of the following positive outcomes:

- *It opened my mind to new aspirations – I can aspire to better things.*
- *I learnt how my mentor got where he/she is.*
- *It empowered me to approach other leaders to ask them how they did it. Since then I have been contacting others, such as previous colleagues, to pick their brains. I've found out this is what other people do, so now I'm doing it.*

- *My mentor has been encouraging and challenging. I have seen my confidence levels grow throughout the year.*
- *I have developed both personally and professionally.*
- *I am now more confident in my own ability and style of leadership.*
- *I have developed better skills that help me to take criticism and build on it in a more positive way rather than take it as a personal attack.*
- *I also take praise more reflectively and analyse what I have done well in any particular job.*

The long-term personal relationship between mentor and mentee has been established by this BLI programme as an effective development tool for participants. It requires a level of discipline on the part of the mentee, but it is cost effective in that it does not involve time out of college and can be pursued even when the mentee's college is not particularly supportive. Five of the eight of the interviewees who had been BLI mentees have since progressed in their careers, and they all say that their mentoring experience contributed to this.

Section Four: Career Progression of Participants

Ten of the thirteen people who were interviewed for this study had progressed in their careers since being involved with the BLI, 77% of the total. Three people progressed from lecturer posts into management, while seven progressed within the management sphere.

The table below illustrates the progression made. Obviously the precise meaning of job titles differs from College to College, but it is clear from the table that people have progressed within the management sphere from, for example, curriculum co-ordination to management posts where they now have line management responsibilities. It is also interesting to note that some interviewees were promoted into new areas of work. This, in two cases, involved a move into more strategic cross-college roles.

<i>Previous Post</i>	<i>Current Post</i>
Lecturer	Course Manager
Lecturer	Curriculum Group Manager
Basic Skills and Literacy Tutor	Skills for Life Co-ordinator for a national project
Curriculum Leader	Curriculum Manager
Deputy Head of Department	Head of Department
Programme Manager	Assistant Director
Project Co-ordinator	Head of Programme
Head of Department, Community Provision	Deputy Director, Creative Studies
Head of Art and Design	Head of 14-19 Development
Area of Learning Co-ordinator	Quality Manager

This career progression also, as would be expected, resulted in an increase in the salary levels of the staff concerned. Participants who reported on this said that their salaries had increased by between £2,000 and £10,000.

Of the three participants who had not gained promotion, all of them said that they anticipated career progression in the future. One woman said that family commitments were preventing her at present, while the other two were 'feeling their way' and considering what route to take.

Most participants, 80%, had progressed within their current college. It is interesting to note that the two people who had moved from their original college spoke negatively about their experiences there. One woman said that her OFSTED shadowing experience had not been appreciated and she had not been asked to give feedback, while another said that her previous college was 'not good regarding BME staff'. Given the current demographic situation, this supports the current thinking that colleges will



not be able to tap into and benefit from the growing numbers of black managers if they do not develop and encourage them within their organisations.

Section Five: Significance of BLI Participation in Career Progression

The ten interviewees that had been promoted were asked to what extent they attributed their success to their experience gained through the BLI. No-one said that it did not contribute. Five said that it was a contributing factor and five said that it was a significant contributing factor.

Clearly, the benefits described in Section Three will have contributed to the progress made by BLI participants, particularly in terms of confidence building and the acquisition of skills and knowledge. There were also benefits relating to the actual process of applying for promotion and succeeding at an interview.

The specific ways in which participants said that the BLI contributed to the process of achieving promotion were:

- The career development workshop helped in completing application forms.
- It was possible to apply what had been learnt at the career development workshop straight away to apply for jobs and get short listed.
- A finance session helped to prove, at interview, knowledge of this aspect of management.
- It is advantageous to have the OFSTED shadowing on ones CV.
- Interviewers were impressed by the OFSTED shadowing experience and it could be referred to during interviews.
- Mentors helped to prepare mentees for interview and were supportive throughout the process.

Other factors contributed to the career progression of interviewees, which have significance for the BLI and the NBP. Several participants spoke of the recent establishment in their college of BME staff groups or networks, and the importance of these in terms of mutual support. This is a development that has been supported and promoted by the BLI and NBP, and one interviewee said that he was encouraging his colleagues to join the NBP. It is important therefore for the BLI and NBP to collect information about these emerging groups and keep in contact with them.

Part of this development is the parity that is developing between teaching and support staff, as the BME groups include staff from both sections of the workforce. Several interviewees spoke of the good practice within the BLI of opening up its opportunities to all categories of college staff. One interviewee worked in college finance, and said that her BLI experience was of great value in terms of building links and understanding between herself and curriculum-based staff. She felt that more secondments for support staff would be beneficial, a suggestion that might be pursued by the BLI.

Section Six: Benefit of BLI Participation to Employers and Colleagues

In general terms, there is evidence that colleges are benefiting from the work of the BLI because their BME staff are participating in a CPD programme that is preparing them for career progression in the further education workforce. Interviewees have expressed their belief that, without these specifically black-led and BME-focused training opportunities, they would not feel so well prepared for promotion within the sector. The specific skills and knowledge that black staff can gain from a BLI environment cannot be accessed in mainstream training situations because of the BLI focus on BME-specific development strategies. One of these is to ensure that BME staff gain a breadth of knowledge of the FE sector, giving them experiences and aspirations across a range of curriculum and management areas. The success of this is illustrated in the examples given below.

In addition, several BLI participants have become involved in or have taken the lead in setting up BME staff groups in their college, serving to support BME staff and to make college management more aware of the aspirations and CPD needs of black staff. It is also important to register the benefit to colleges of the mentor training that has taken place. This has been for senior college staff including a number of Principals, who have become more aware of the specific circumstances in which black staff find themselves in their own colleges as they strive to progress in their careers.

Interviewees have given the following examples of ways in which their involvement in BLI programmes have benefited their colleges and their colleagues:

Shadowing an OFSTED or ALI Inspection Team

- *I did a presentation for senior and middle managers about the lessons learnt, the inspection process, and key messages.*
- *For my own department, I learnt what to put in the forefront, what to signpost.*
- *I did a presentation for the college management team and my own section, prior to our inspection. The college and my section got a grade one.*
- *I did a report back for the Assistant Director for Quality, and my Curriculum Team.*
- *I did a small presentation on my ALI work shadow at our middle manager's meeting*
- *My college has been very supportive. I've been asked to give presentations, work on staff development and develop new systems.*

Clearly, the OFSTED inspection shadowing was of greatest benefit to colleges that were scheduled for inspection at about the same time that the secondment took place, and most colleges did take advantage of the experience gained by their member of staff. Some, however, were not so supportive:

- *The Principal and Vice Principal were brilliant before and after, but my Head of Year didn't acknowledge that I'd been. I wasn't asked to give feedback.*
- *Some colleagues were not bothered. I don't see any benefits to the organisation.*

Career Development

For the most part, the BLI Career Development Workshops are designed to benefit the individuals that attend. However, there are examples of how attendance at this course has benefited the participant's college. In particular, people have successfully applied for promotion and been able to contribute more to their college in their new role.

One participant said that she has used her experience of the workshop to help her colleagues. She has used some of the materials provided, and helped them with applications and interview practice.

In addition, one college's staff development department established its own, similar, in-house course when it realised that a large number of its black staff wanted to attend the BLI programme. In this instance the BLI programme raised awareness within the college of a CPD need that they had not previously identified.

Mentoring

Staff who have taken up a mentoring opportunity with BLI feel that it has been of benefit to their college in a variety of ways. In particular, they have been able to talk with their mentor about ways that things might be improved in terms of college developments. Also, mentees have developed a broader view of the further education sector and become more confident about their role in it. Their mentoring experience has helped them to become more effective in their professional practice, which is of benefit to their organisation. Interviewees have expressed this in the following ways:

- *My college benefited because I can see the bigger picture now, I can understand where curriculum people are coming from. (From a member of support staff)*
- *We introduced a diversity network. The college's staff development department arranged training for people in the network and we are now the staff contacts on diversity issues.*
- *I feel that my organisation has gained a more confident and skilled professional who is more effective and has a positive effect on colleagues and learners alike.*
- *I'm now in the BLI/NBM (NMP) loop so I inform colleagues of what is available.*
- *I visited the mentor's college and saw good practice which I suggested we follow at our college.*

Section Seven: Pointers for Continuous Improvement

The extent to which the BLI can respond to the continuing and developing needs of the sector and of BME staff will depend on the level of funding that is generated for this work. A number of ideas that have emerged from this study which will require extra funding, while others can probably be integrated into current programmes if small efficiencies are made.

For example, some people who have been involved with the mentoring programme have felt that, once the mentoring relationship was set up, there was very limited contact between them and the BLI. Introducing a series of e-mail contacts between BLI and the mentee, to establish that the mentoring relationship is proceeding and has been completed successfully would provide a reassuring customer care focus, and it would allow the BLI to keep more closely in touch with its participants.

The issue of maintaining communication with ex-BLI participants is important in terms of the development of the organisation. On-going personal communications, particularly about career development and CPD opportunities, were referred to by a number of interviewees, although it was not clear whether these came from the BLI or the NBP. These were appreciated because it made staff feel 'in the loop' and associated with a wider movement. The BLI's emerging relationship with the NBP will allow for a greater emphasis to be put on joint communications strategies.

Similarly, it is clear that there is a growing trend towards the development of BME networks or groups within colleges. The BLI and NBP need to gather intelligence about these developments in order to promote their services.

The induction sessions that are provided for people who are involved with the secondment and mentoring programmes were well received, although it was felt by some participants that these would have been improved by:

- There being a shorter time between the induction and the secondment.
- Being introduced to one or two mentors during the induction.
- The planning-in of a de-briefing session at the end of the mentoring period.

People appreciated the benefit of meeting colleagues from across the country. The danger of making the organisation and its activities too London-focused has to be addressed. One interviewee said:

A lot of what is put on is based in London and this is a barrier. Also, a lot seems to be put on at the last minute or in evening sessions. Some of us have different issues to colleges in London or in areas of large BME populations.

One respondent said that e-mail addresses were circulated at her induction, and she would have liked to have kept in touch with other colleagues from across the country,



but '*nothing came of it*' and wondered whether some kind of networking could have been facilitated via the website.

Opinion varied among interviewees on the extent to which programmes should be customised as opposed to generalist. This is an issue that the BLI and NMP should address in the coming months as they develop their collaborative programme. It is possible that part of the response, dealing with particular minority issues, could be developed on-line. For example, one respondent said that, as someone who was brought up outside of the UK, she needed help to understand the UK public sector, and in particular the role of the plethora of organisations that work alongside further education. Others said that the BLI's approach and content should be broad, precisely because of the wide range of needs that participants have. For example, generic programmes for support staff as well as teaching staff are supported. On the contrary, however, some people have called for a distinction to be made between BLI/NBP provision for senior managers as opposed to middle managers. The response to these differing views and needs will be a balancing act that will depend largely on the funding available.

Section Eight: Conclusions

The evidence collected from the interviewees who participated in this study would suggest that, at the level of both personal development and the improvement of professional skills and knowledge, the BLI has offered its participants positive and valuable programmes. Following their involvement in these programmes, 77% had gained promotion to more senior posts and the remaining 13% said that they fully expected to progress in their careers in the future. All of the people who had gained promotion said that the role of the BLI had been a contributing factor, with 50% saying that it had been a significant contributing factor.

The benefits that BLI participants describe range from developments in their levels of confidence and aspirations, to specific skills gained during their BLI mentoring, shadowing or career development programmes. Participants had the opportunity to engage in a range of practical and interactive activities during their BLI involvement, which provided direct opportunities for individual development.

In addition, the participants' colleges and colleagues have been seen to have benefited from their employees' involvement with the BLI. Of particular value was the feedback that participants in the OFSTED shadowing programme were able to give to their fellow lecturers and managers. The positive impact that the BLI, together with the NMP, is having on the development of a diverse workforce and particularly the generation of an ethnically diverse layer of managers, has been teased out in this study.

The value of a CPD programme that is focused on the career development of BME staff has been explored. Several interviewees made reference to positive aspects of the black-led nature of this initiative, providing proof of the need for positive action programmes such as those provided by the BLI.

Similarly, the Network for Black Professionals, has been referred to positively by the BLI participants that were involved in this study. There is widespread support for the recent expansion of the NBP, including the management of the BLI being transferred to the NBP. This study has highlighted a number of ways in which this emerging partnership can develop, in particular in the field of communications and marketing. Furthermore, in developing joint initiatives it is possible to envisage the Network having a greater influence on the development of the diverse FE workforce, and a continuing impact upon the individuals who are involved with it, eliciting praise such as the following comment that was recorded during this study:

The networking and meeting with colleagues at all levels has been extremely useful. The events have been very positive experiences, I have learnt a lot, made some good contacts who have been very supportive, and I have had lots of fun and laughter!