


Using PATH to increase diversity in the workforce

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Organisation:	LB of Barking and Dagenham (learn more)
Number of properties:	19,659
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Since 2002, Barking and Dagenham Council's housing department has been running a training scheme with PATH (Positive Action Training Highway) National to ensure that all levels of officers and managers represent the diversity of the local community.



Background

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is a stock retaining council that manages and maintains around 20,000 properties in East London. In recent years the borough's population has increased rapidly. It currently stands at an estimated 169,199 living in 68,851 households, but is projected to increase to 200,043 by 2020. An important change has been the increase to 25 per cent in the proportion of black and ethnic minority residents, an increase from 15 per cent in 1991.

In 2002 it was acknowledged by the Council's housing department that there was a lack of the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff at officer and managerial levels. In a drive to build stronger communities and to reflect the demographic make of the borough, the department decided to use PATH as a means of recruiting housing trainees into the organisation from a BME background.

PATH National is a training and development agency set up to address under-representation and inequalities of BME groups in management and the professions. Its research shows that many public sector roles are not only under-represented but there are also skills deficits within many fields.

Aims and objectives

The initial trainee scheme aimed to provide work experience and a qualification for successful applicants. It has been successful in providing opportunities for BME applicants to learn about housing and subsequently seek gainful employment. There was still under-representation of BME groups at management levels. In 2004, once the trainee scheme had bedded in, the department's senior managers decided to focus on management

traineeships to increase the proportion of BME staff at higher levels within the structure.

The development programmes

There are two types of training scheme used:

- Path Traineeship: a 2 year on-the-job work placement coupled with weekly day release for academic study and personal development. Candidates fill specific roles such as Trainee Contract Monitoring Officer and Trainee Project Officer.
- Management Development Programme: for staff, mostly from BME backgrounds, to benefit from management qualifications through PATH National.

PATH trainees are based in teams and they are mentored by experienced managers with a social housing background either from the Council or other local organisations. The mentors are specially recruited to provide advice and guidance to the mentees.

The Management Development Programme is a scheme part funded by the Council and partly by PATH National through the London Development Agency. This enables employees to pursue a DMS (Diploma in Management Studies) or ADMS (Advanced Diploma in Management Studies) qualification. Employees undertake projects that relate to their role and fulfil the needs of the organisation.

To be entered onto the management development programme, all applicants must be working towards or currently hold a managerial position. Candidates must successfully complete an interview and undergo a 'Training Needs Analysis' with a member of the programme team.

These training programmes benefit successful applicants by providing:

- practical learning experience
- in-house development training course
- continuous support from PATH National and the Council
- day release to attend a funded college or university course.

Outcomes

Barking and Dagenham has positive results with the training development schemes. Out of eight PATH trainees in the original scheme, three of them are now working permanently for the Council and six have progressed elsewhere. Six employees who undertook the Management Development Programme have made step changes within the organisation.

Reviewing the training programme

Some adjustments were made to the initial plan for PATH trainees to spend short periods of time at all offices and sections as this was deemed to be confusing and did not offer enough stability and learning. Now trainees are recruited to fill a post for the duration of the two year training contract.

The scheme has been such a success in the housing department that it is now being piloted in other services within the Council.

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