

Mayor's Construction Academy (MCA) Employer Group Roundtable

Friday 28 February 2020

Meeting notes

Long-standing good practice, new innovations and opportunities to develop practice were shared across the table. Some provoking questions were raised about the efficacy of Mental Health First Aid, a popular route for many employers to address the mental wellbeing challenges the workforce faces. And, on reflection, it feels like we are still in the earliest stages of thinking about what diversity means for sector leadership, although lots of good work is ongoing in the area of recruitment which we were pleased to hear.

We will explore the issues and ideas surfaced in the session with employers over the coming months. We would be delighted to partner with organisations which feel they may have a role in leading some of these conversations. We will be developing practical, low- no-cost solutions to move forward in these areas with employers in the coming year or two.

Mental health

Opening comments

Mental ill-health remains a significant issue in the industry. While moves have been made towards better provision of support, suicide rates remain persistently high and risk-factors for poor mental health remain embedded in working practices. What can industry do to ensure that steps taken towards supporting better mental health go beyond the confines of training rooms and reach the workers on-site?

Discussion themes

1. Training at senior management level

There was agreement across the room that training at a senior management level will help change cultures within organisations. Many are investing in Mental Health First Aid training, advising that it felt to be very useful by employers. It was noted that there are a number of formats available ranging from half-day to the full two-day programme. However, it was noted that the term 'first aid' can be problematic. The term 'mental health awareness and referral' felt a better descriptor and a more helpful framing of the role of site leaders that are more educated on the complexities of how poor mental health can present.

2. Mentoring and pastoral care

It was suggested that some areas of the industry are still poor at indicating and supporting. Having mentors and pastoral care is essential for all new-starters and should be accessible daily. It can be really challenging for smaller firms to manage this; creative solutions to ensure the support is consistent but doesn't not require smaller firms to become expert in wider social issues should be explored.

3. Access to services on site

It was mentioned that unions have historically helped ensure safe places for staff to seek help. It was reported that membership is lower than in previous years which weakens the ability of the Unions to provide that support, or to raise the profile of services available. Workers should be made aware of what is on offer but allow for anonymity. It was stressed that the provision of welfare facilities on site can be a challenge. SMEs tend to lack capacity and funds to provide onsite

care compared with larger employers. Where this is available, a lack of space considerably limits the value than can be delivered to workers on sites.

Diversity, equality and inclusion

Opening comments

The industry has long recognised the need to change recruitment practices to improve diversity in the industry, to some success. However, we know that the real gains come through diversity of leadership, an area in which the sector still trails behind many others. How can employers ensure their work on diversity at entry-level translates to a diversity in leadership?

Discussion themes

1. Data

There is a need to champion collecting and analysing data in an intersectional way. However, it was noted that there are still issues with GDPR and collecting data on protected characteristics. Main contractors are well placed to gather data for their sites, but completion rates in data capture exercises are generally poor at this time.

2. Diversity in leadership and supply chains

There is a continual need for diversity in senior leadership teams and on employer boards in order to attract new talent, as well as to retain diversity in middle management. It was suggested that there should be a clear and evident 'diversity code' within the sector addressing all aspects of diversity. There are several available through various organisations, including DfE and the GLA, although some degree of standardisation would be helpful to make things simpler for employers.

3. Mentoring and pastoral care

Mentoring and pastoral care play a key role in supporting the retention and progression of staff from diverse backgrounds. More needs to be done to ensure that there are mentors available to staff within the sector. Employers should also look to invest in these resources further up the chain in to leadership positions, to ensure that staff are supported to remain in the sector and to progress.

Key resources shared at the meeting:

- Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) – [Stop. Make a change.](#)
- CECA - [Inspiring Change Conference](#) – 13 May 2020
- Supply Chain Sustainability School - [FIR toolkit](#)
- TUC – [Dying to Work](#) charter
- CITB – [mental health first aid](#) training – accessed via grants system
- Financial Times – [Diversity Leaders](#)
- McKinsey – [Delivering Through Diversity](#)

Attendee List

Chaired by:

Beth Penwarden, Principal Business Engagement Officer, Greater London Authority (GLA)

Francesca Lewis, Housing Policy Manager, Greater London Authority (GLA)

Organisation
Battersea Power Station Development Company
Black Professionals in Construction (BPIC) Network
Build UK
CBI
CITB
Civil Engineering Contractors Association
Collins Contractors
Construction Youth Trust
Department for Work and Pensions
DiverseCity Surveyors
Federation of Master Builders
Home Builders Federation
Institution of Civil Engineers
Jomas Associates
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
London Progression Collaboration
Mace Group
National Access & Scaffolding Confederation
National Federation of Builders
Supply Chain Sustainability School
TUC London, East and South East
Unite the Union
Workforce Integration Network
YouthBuild Ventures UK