



# Reach Society

Building Connections

Patron Lord Ouseley

Achievers Survey – secrets of their success!  
(A Reach Society & Kickstart Consultancy Project)

## 1. Aims

A short questionnaire was distributed to fourteen (14) professional Black men identified by Reach Society as having achieved successful professional careers in the UK and who are seeking to make a positive contribution to the lives of Black boys and young men (through the Society).

The purpose of the achievers survey was to examine the influence of four distinct facets of their lives: (a) family, (b) school, (c) friends, and (d) wider community on the personal development of these men both prior to and post transition into their teenage years.

Our primary motivation was to identify any prevalent factors that may have contributed to or detracted from their success in later life, and to consider how this information could be used to encourage, motivate and inspire our target cohorts of Black boys and young men.

## 2. Themes

The respondents provided examples of **positive influences** coming from family, school (teachers), friends and the wider community.

The respondents provided examples of **negative influences** coming mainly from school (teachers), friends and the wider community.

A predominant theme or message was the **influence of immediate family**, particularly in the early developmental years. Examples that respondents provided as positive aspects in their development included:

- setting clear boundaries and expectations;
- encouraging an ethos of hard work;
- reinforcing the importance of education;
- encouraging a sense of personal responsibility;
- giving praise and rewarding effort ;
- highlighting the effect of consequences to actions;
- sharing family values; and
- encouraging positive leisure and spiritual activities.

The only example of negative influence within the family was persistent bullying from an older brother, which left the respondent with “*bad memories*” that he still has not resolved today.

The information provided by respondents on the impact of school, friends and the wider community was less consistent.



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Examples of positive influences given by teachers included showing kindness and support, as well as giving praise and leadership responsibilities which helped to raise self confidence.

There were also examples of teachers being a negative influence by creating and limiting self belief. One respondent reported that a teacher advised several students to aspire no higher than “*a job on the factory floor*”.

Many respondents reported examples of positive influence from friends and the wider community in particular those who provided good advice and encouragement.

The negative influence from friends and the wider community appeared to be mostly in-advertent. Respondents shared examples of “*local unmarried women, who had many children, but could not afford to look after them;*” or “*local men who gambled or drank excessively;*” also some were distracted by the social activities of friends; and the fear of teasing from friends for not following their lifestyles.

### 3. Defining success

Respondents offered a range of definitions of success that included:

- Recognising and doing the things that you love and which are important to you;
- Success is doing lots of small things towards achieving a goal every day;
- Being responsible for family and contributing of the community;
- Being at peace with self;
- Reaching that point where you're not being chased or chasing;
- Having personal choices in life.

### 4. Advice

Respondents' advice to young people fell into three main themes:

- Knowing yourself and identifying your personal strengths and natural talents;
- Considering the impact of your actions and decisions; and
- Having goals and dreams and working towards achieving them.

### 5. Summary

The overwhelming theme emerging from the respondents is the consistent presence and positive influence of their parents and close family members prior to their transition into the teenage years.

By providing an environment that gave praise, rewarded effort, encouraged participation in positive leisure and spiritual activities parents and close family



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members created a healthy emotional store and positive self esteem within our cohort of successful professional Black men.

The respondents expressed and implied values and beliefs about recognising that actions have consequences, setting clear boundaries, the importance of education and encouraging an ethos of hard work - all helped to demonstrate the importance of taking personal responsibility.

School, friends and the wider community showed a mixture of positive and negative influence both pre and post transition.

The anecdotal evidence suggested that our cohort of respondents were more likely to embrace the advice and support given by others, post transition, which aligned or replicated that given by parents during the formative years.

They were also more likely to choose to reject the advice and activities which conflicted with the values set by their parents and close family members (or primary carers), as they were able to recognise when it was generally unhelpful to their pursuit of personal development and success.

Collectively, respondents felt that the biggest contributors to achieving success were:

- Nurturing family values;
- Engagement in spiritual and positive leisure activities;
- Discovering personal strengths and talents;
- Developing a sense of personal responsibility;
- Having goals and working to achieve them;
- Recognising the importance of academic education;
- Recognising and embracing support; and
- Encouragement to follow their dreams

Respondents shared many definitions of “success”, but significantly none appeared to align with the media driven view of celebrity and materialism.

Respondents’ overwhelming message was that success was based on achieving personal pre-determined or selected goals. Its rewards were the satisfaction of having the freedom to do things of their choosing and to help others.