

Employability Day in Leicester, 29 May

Young people, aged 10 to 19, in Leicester and nearby areas, and their parents and carers, had the opportunity to gain invaluable information, advice and guidance from roughly two dozen professionals, from the local Black community, and slightly more than two dozen local employers, large and small, at the first Employability Day held on 29 May 2019, on the campus of the University of Leicester.

The event, the first of its kind in the City, was organised by the Foundation for Reach Society in association with the University of Leicester, in order to demonstrate how young people could be inspired via ready access to professionals and employers. Roughly 300 young people and parents registered for this employability experience.

The attendees experienced a themed workshop led by TSB, and had access to a panel of 6 professionals, from the Black community that included Camille London-Miyo, a senior educator; Minister Maxine Douglas, COGOP; Learie Gonsalves, director, One Building Solution; Bishop Delroy Hall, NTCG; Andrew Fortnam-Tomlinson, an entrepreneur; and Marc Tossa, risk management, Lloyds Banking Group.

Across the event the attendees interacted with a cohort of exhibitors on the day. The exhibitors were drawn from seven sectors. From the financial sector there were TSB and Lloyds Bank. From the education sector there were the University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the National College for High Speed Rail. From the uniformed services (for the defense of the nation) there were the British Army and the Royal Air Force; and from the local services there were Leicester Police Service, Leicester Fire & Rescue and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. From national employers there were 3M, Accenture and the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (or RICS).

Local businesses and community groups were also represented by Black Excellence Group, Caterpillar, Clarion Education Foundation, LOROS (a hospice), Manna Healthy Group, One Building Solutions, RAFFA, Reach Society, Shelton's Coffee and V Jay Theatre Productions.

Richard Cooper, a director of the Foundation for Reach Society, said: "The City of Leicester pilot project undertaken with the University of Leicester has taken roughly 5 months from concept to delivery. It attracted local Black professionals and employers to support the idea; and reached out to young people and their parents or carers to register for the event. The positive response from all stakeholders on the day is further confirmation that an inspirational event of this type can add value to the target beneficiaries."

The Foundation for Reach Society is the outreach team conceived by Reach Society which was set up as a social enterprise in 2010 to encourage, motivate and inspire young people, especially those from the Black community, to raise their educational attainment through increased contact with professionals.

Dr Dwain Neil, chairman of Reach Society, said: "The whole point of today's Employability Day was to demonstrate that the model of inspirational events pioneered in London over 8 years, could be tailored for roll out in the City of Leicester, as was done last year in Wolverhampton. The Society's objective is to continue to roll out inspirational activities in urban areas across the UK."

(Dr Dwain A. Neil)