Role modelling policing as a career to Black young people

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Chief Constable Garry Forsyth recognises the challenge of recruiting and retaining people from diverse backgrounds

Case study   3 mins read

We have been fortunate to recruit police officers into Bedfordshire Police from our Asian communities, but we need to have full representation of the public we serve. We are under-represented in our Black community and need to change this to build trust and confidence both locally and nationally.

Employability days

Bedfordshire Police are looking to the medium- and long-term future recruitment of Black officers and staff by taking part in 'Luton employability day'. This event is being organised by Reach Society, a social enterprise that encourages, motivates and inspires Black young people to realise their potential as they transition into adult life.

Initially piloted in Wolverhampton in 2018, the event is free to delegates aged 10 to 19 and employers from all three sectors. It is being promoted via Black faith and community organisations in Bedfordshire and the neighbouring counties of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. Reach Society considers this to be a more effective way of attracting the attendance of Black young people and parents than working with schools.

At the Luton employability day, Black personnel from both the uniformed and non-uniformed parts of Bedfordshire Police will be interacting directly with the delegates as role models. They will demonstrate that, contrary to some misinformed attitudes, it is possible for people like them to have highly successful and personally satisfying careers in the police service.

The importance of role models

Dr Dwain Neil OBE is chairman and one of the founders of Reach Society. He describes the importance of access to Black role models at the employability day events:

> **A mother said to us, "My son wants to be an airline pilot but he's hesitating about applying to flight school". He came along to a recent Careers Conference in London and we hooked him up with a British Airways pilot. They talked for two hours. He subsequently applied to flight school and got in. His hesitancy was that he'd never seen a Black pilot.**
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> **If you put the right people on your stands, the inspiring and successful police officers and staff from the Black community, you'll encourage young people to take the next steps towards a career they may not have previously considered.**
>
> *Dr Dwain Neil OBE*

Dr Neil is keen that representatives from the Black Police Association (BPA) are also present at employability days. He feels it's important that the delegates get a sense of the solidarity and support that is readily available to Black officers and staff, not only within Bedfordshire Police but across the rest of the police service as well.

Dr Dwain Neil OBE

The employability day will become an annual event for Bedfordshire Police, providing a unique platform to showcase policing as an excellent career to Black young people at a critical time in their development. It is not only about planting seeds in the minds of Black youngsters who might aspire

to joining the service in the future, but also about encouraging others to join now.

"Our target group is age 10 to 19," explains Dr Neil.

"We chose 10 because we know if you catch young people at that age, they start looking further down the road. From age 10 onwards, it's about a conversation with purpose.

"From those conversations, young people will identify pathways to success that they are attracted to."

Work with the Reach Society

Reach Society aims to deliver further employability days in other parts of the country where there are significant Black populations. The social enterprise is keen to partner with police constabularies and other large employing organisations that share its vision.

Visit the Reach Society website or **get in touch** for more information.

Tags

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