

**THE EVALUATION OF THE BME STAFF PROGRESSION PILOT “STEP FORWARD”  
FOR WEST MIDLANDS LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD**

**Final Report**

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## 1. Executive Summary

- West Midlands Criminal Justice Board (WMCJB) established the “Step Forward” pilot project in September 2008 with the overall aim of improving the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff in local criminal justice service (CJS) agencies with a view to addressing their underrepresentation at senior levels. The second aim was to increase the confidence of BME staff in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS.
  
- The “Step Forward” project comprises:
  - Personal and professional development training, including the development of personal action plans that will form each participant’s framework for the outcomes of the programme
  - One-to-one coaching and mentoring to support and inform the implementation of personal action plans
  - Shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities to provide additional practical experience in relation to career progression goals
  - Group ‘Call – back’ sessions at which participants will be able to share learning and support, and review the progress of the programme.
  
- WMCJB recruited an external consultant to oversee the implementation and facilitate the smooth running of the project and to conduct the training courses. As a result of staff changes within WMCJB, the consultant was required to take a more active role than had been planned. While there was general appreciation of the work that the consultant achieved, the lack of WMCJB drive to the project created operational difficulties. This issue of strategic direction require addressing before any continuation of the project.
  
- Promotion of the project began with the consultant’s presentations to the WMCJB Equality and Diversity Group and the WMCJB BME Staff Advisory Group the autumn of 2008. Publicity aimed at potential participants, both trainees and mentors, did

not, however, start until December 2008, a difficult time because of the holiday period, with the result that response was poor. Even after the deadline for applications was extended, only from the Probation Service were there substantial numbers of applications. No applications to be trainees were received from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and no applications to be mentors from the Youth Offending Services (YOS).

- The recruitment process consisted of an initial short listing based on the application forms conducted by the consultant in conjunction with some Equality staff from WMCJB and the agencies. It is understood that some equality leads were not involved. It may be important for future roll out of the scheme that there is input to the selection process from all agencies. The short listed candidates were then interviewed. The assessment procedure was based on existing evidence of achievement, commitment to learning and development and career progression, and current personal development plans/objectives.
- Ten trainees were accepted on the scheme from the five CJS agencies represented in the applications received. This represents only 75% of the intended complement, the target having been two individuals from each agency. Because of the greater number of applications from the Probation Service, four individuals were accepted on the scheme from that agency. In the event the trainee from the Police did not attend the initial training and therefore did not take up the “Step Forward” opportunity.
- Eight mentors were appointed from the Probation Service, Police, CPS and Courts Service (HMCS). No mentors took part from the YOS and Prison Service (HMPS). One of the police mentors appointed did not in fact take up the opportunity.
- The training courses were conducted by the independent consultant. For the trainees the content covered:
  - Priority Action 4 of PSA 24
  - Personal/Professional achievements, goal and ‘blocks’

- Rights and responsibilities under current anti – discrimination legislation
  - Understanding and demonstrating competences
  - Preparing progression/job applications
  - Interview preparation and performance
  - Reflecting on learning experiences
  - The coaching/mentoring process
  - Developing career progression strategies and personal action plans
- All those interviewed felt that they had benefitted from the course. The benefits mentioned included gaining knowledge about interview techniques and employment rights, gaining confidence from presenting to the group their own experience and qualifications, developing a focus for development and the support derived from networking with others.
  - The mentors' course similarly covered Priority Action 4 of PSA 24, common blocks to staff progression and anti-discrimination legislation. It also covered guidance on conducting mentoring. Most of the mentors interviewed regarded the training as a refresher to skills and knowledge that they already had but some pointed to the improvement of awareness of the expectations of "Step Forward".
  - Mentoring pairings were established in the spring of 2009. Because of the smaller than anticipated number of mentors, two of the mentors worked with two trainees. The matching of the trainees with candidates considered the personal action plans of the trainees and also personality issues, such as the existence of factors which might hinder the development of a relationship. Only one mentor/trainee partnership was within the same agency but trainees interviewed did not find that important. Except for one pairing, the mentors and trainees established successful relationships.
  - Trainees and mentors interviewed had had between two and six mentoring sessions. Since the scheme envisaged a monthly meeting for six months, some trainees have not received the support that was intended.
  - The shadowing, attachment and secondment part of the scheme has presented more implementation problems and not all trainees have been able to take up these

opportunities. Although some trainees have been able to make their own arrangements or their mentor has acted for them, in about one third of cases, the consultant or an equality officer has had to intervene because of difficulties. These problems were generally because a trainee wished to take up a shadowing, secondment or attachment opportunity in an agency other than that in which he/she currently worked. These have included cases where the agency employing the trainee was unwilling to release the trainee and alternatively where the agency required to provide an opportunity for a particular individual was reluctant. Where trainees had been able to take up opportunities in shadowing and attachment they felt that the experience had helped them and the one individual who has obtained a secondment for 2-5 years was enthusiastic.

- There is evidence from comments made by trainees to the evaluators of increasing personal confidence as a result of taking part in “Step Forward”. This confidence was thought to be derived from increased awareness of their rights, feelings of achievement in getting through the selection process onto the scheme, support from the independent consultant and others to challenge blocks and barriers and support from other participants.
- Trainees interviewed felt that “Step Forward” had given them improved knowledge in two main areas; employment rights and procedure and the wider criminal justice system, outside their own particular work area. Knowledge of the wider CJS was felt to improve their potential performance at work, even if they in the end stayed in the same area of work.
- Trainees suggested that they had developed through being on the programme also in learning to break down goals into small achievable steps. One mentor pointed to improved self value for himself because he had been able to assist someone else.
- Some trainees had achieved goals set in their personal development plans, or gone a long way towards achieving their goals. Others had been given the opportunity to prepare for a move and improve prospects of success in any future application.
- It is unlikely that there have been significant effects on the BME workforce in the CJS generally because of the limited publicity about the scheme.

- While most of those interviewed thought that the scheme has potential to impact on BME staff progression and retention, as a small mentoring scheme “Step Forward” is unlikely alone to have great effect. “Step Forward” must be part of a wider programme of monitoring and positive action to remove discrimination and encourage BME staff.
- As a small mentoring scheme, “Step Forward” alone is unlikely to result in greatly increased BME confidence in the LCJB/CJS. The impact of small schemes may however be enhanced if their success is publicised, in particular by using the personal testimonies of those who have participated in the pilot.

## **Recommendations**

### **Strategic Direction and Administration:**

#### **Recommendation 1 WMCJB should retain the “Step Forward” scheme within the West Midlands area**

Considering the benefits of the scheme outlined in this report and in order to comply with Key Priority Action 4 of PSA 24 it is recommended that the WMCJB retains the “Step Forward” scheme as a multi-agency county-wide mentoring scheme for BME employees within the CJS. The Board may consider the extension of the scheme to other ‘underrepresented’ groups within the criminal justice workforce.

#### **Recommendation 2 WMCJB should appoint a Board member to be a Champion for the scheme**

Implementation of “Step Forward” to date has suffered from problems of communication and requires more positive leadership. It is therefore recommended that a particular board member should be made responsible for the project becoming a “Step Forward” Champion. Appointment of a Champion will ensure that “Step Forward” remains in focus and is not lost in the busy agenda of the Board. The Champion would report to the Board on progress and problems encountered, ensuring that other board members were aware of the project and could feed back information to the agencies they represent. The Champion would also be the point of contact for those implementing the project if difficulties necessitate

intervention at senior level. Some of those interviewed agreed that this was the way forward. One comment was:

*“By a Board champion I mean an enthusiastic committed member of the Board who is going to do whatever it takes to make sure that his or her agency and all the other agencies live up to the commitment in terms of cascading information, in terms of responding to placement requests and so on.”*

**Recommendation 3 WMCJB should appoint a board manager to be responsible for the scheme**

Implementation to date has been hampered by the lack of a manager within WMCJB for much of the period in which “Step Forward” has been implemented. It is essential that there should be a manager within WMCJB, with responsibility for overall management and routine administration of the project. It is expected that this could be within the remit of the existing Diversity Officer. The manager should ensure that mentoring arrangements are monitored and maintain project documentation. The manager should also provide services such as arranging meeting and booking rooms.

Most of those interviewed, while appreciating the commitment and special knowledge of the consultant and recognising the value that an independent person can bring in lack of local bias or influences, thought that a continuation of the scheme within the Board would need the input from a manager who, like the independent consultant, is committed and determined to overcome obstacles. The employment of an external consultant on a permanent basis to manage the scheme as for the pilot is not recommended as it may be too costly. However it is suggested that some input of the independent consultant may be needed to mentor the manager during the period of transfer of responsibilities.

**Recommendation 4 The Board should hold a strategic meeting to consider how the scheme is to be fully developed.**

An Action Plan is essential to provide direction on what needs to be done or structures that need to be put in place for the scheme to work effectively and who should be accountable or responsible for the different stages of the Plan.

**Recommendation 5 A blueprint document of the scheme should be published as a Board document.**

In addition, if possible, the Board could commission, with the approval of the independent consultant, the publication of the training manuals used by the consultant for the training of mentors and mentees. These documents would be an invaluable resource to other LCJBs intending to set up their own schemes and could be sold to interested Boards for a small fee.

**Promoting the Scheme**

**Recommendation 6 WMCJB should work closely with Equality leads in the six agencies**

There should be a closer working relationship between the WMLCJB and the Equality Leads in the six agencies, in order to promote and facilitate the continuation of the scheme.

**Recommendation 7 WMCJB should be aware that the methodology of promoting the scheme will need to vary between agencies**

In the process of promoting the scheme, the Board should be aware of the different occupational cultures and systems within the six agencies and ensure that the scheme is tailored to the needs of individual agencies in order to ensure maximum effect. A one size fits all approach is unlikely to be effective. This may be achieved through closer working with agency equality leads (Recommendation 5).

**Recommendation 8 WMCJB should consider holding open events about the scheme**

Open events for BME staff are a possible means of increasing awareness of the scheme and potential recruitment. These could be centrally organised by WMCJB but would probably be more accessible if held within the separate agencies. The events should include presentations from trainees who have passed through the scheme and opportunities for informal questioning.

**Recommendation 9 WMCJB should consider producing post project publicity about the scheme.**

This could include, with the permission and cooperation of participants, accounts of experiences on the scheme and perceptions of benefits and progress made. This would have

the dual potential to raise awareness for future operation of the scheme and improve confidence among BME staff.

### **Communication**

**Recommendation 10 WMCJB must ensure that appropriate measures are taken to cascade down information about the scheme to the agencies and the agencies themselves must pass this information to staff through briefings and staff meetings**

It is clear that senior managers at WMCJB level are aware of the scheme and agreed its establishment as a pilot. However it appears that information about the existence of the scheme was not cascaded down in all agencies to operational line managers. Operational line managers will need to take into account workload implications in order to be able to release staff to take part in the scheme.

Information given to line managers must emphasise not only the benefits of the scheme to individual BME staff but also the benefits to the agency with regard to maximising the potential, motivation and confidence in the CJS of the BME workforce.

**Recommendation 11 WMCJB should consider holding briefing sessions for line managers of candidates on the scheme**

In order to ensure that local managers of successful candidates are fully aware of the implications of the scheme, briefing sessions before the trainee starts may be beneficial.

### **Scheme conduct**

**Recommendation 12 WMCJB should ensure that the content of the “Step Forward” training courses provides the trainees with relevant information and is conducted in such a way that trainees can benefit. It is essential that the courses are quality assured and comparable with established training courses in staff mentoring.**

The training course has been an essential element of the project in providing information on legislation and good practice, and in introducing the “Step Forward” process. However the training has also been designed to encourage learning and to assist trainees to plan their development. Trainees on the scheme have referred to increased confidence as an early result of the training, arising from group discussions and practical exercises.

**Recommendation 13** Considering the fact that the independent consultant who delivered the training programmes during the pilot is a person with requisite knowledge in employment and BME issues and has the ability to relate to diverse groups of trainees with varying backgrounds, knowledge and expectations, WMCJB should ensure that an external consultant with similar credentials is engaged to conduct future training programmes.

The external input to the pilot project training has been valuable in providing special knowledge and expertise and a fresh and unbiased viewpoint outside the management structure of the LCJB. It is essential that the consultant employed by WMCJB for future training has the necessary expertise and credibility. However, the development of a national training package which could be rolled out locally might reduce costs (see Key points for replication below).

**Recommendation 14** WMCJB should consider including more group meetings of mentors and trainees on the scheme

Group meetings of mentors and trainees in a scheme cohort may prove beneficial in exchange of experience and networking. It is understood that one meeting which took place because of a visit from OCJR was found helpful by participants and this could usefully be repeated, perhaps quarterly.

**Recommendation 15** WMCJB should consider extending the mentoring period from six to 12 months

Trainees on the scheme felt that one year would be a more appropriate period in which to fully take advantage of the mentoring relationship and to see change. A 12 month period of one session per month should not impact too greatly on operational priorities and would provide time to take up attachment and secondment opportunities and possibly see career progress.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Recommendation 16** WMCJB should maintain contact with trainees after the scheme to monitor their progress

The long term effect on participants' staff progression and retention can only be ascertained if some monitoring of their future activity is carried out. This could be quite informal by telephone.

**Recommendation 17 WMCJB should ensure that records are maintained concerning those on the scheme**

Documentation is required in order that information can be supplied to the individual CJS agencies for the purposes of effective personnel management, guarding against difficulties caused by changes in managers, and be used for future evaluation of impact on the BME workforce. Records should include documentation concerning the application, permissions obtained from managers, progress of monitoring (e.g. sessions achieved), shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities offered and taken up and any difficulties experienced.

**Recommendation 18 WMCJB should ensure that statistics relating to BME staffing are collected at LCJB level.**

The assessment of the long term effectiveness of schemes such as "Step Forward" in respect of the BME workforce as a whole can only be effected if statistics relating to proportion of BME staff, levels of appointment, retention and progression are maintained. In any LCJB initiative as in this project these are required at LCJB level. However, the MDS and Employment Diagnostic Tools should be ready and possibly in use by mid-next year and will provide

**Key points to note if scheme is to be replicated in other LCJB areas**

- The LCJB concerned must show strong commitment to the project by appointing a Board Champion and a Board officer to take responsibility for implementing and overseeing the development of the scheme. The Board officer should take on the role of project coordinator. The need to deliver against indicator 4 of PSA24 should take priority over any other local reasons for introducing the scheme.

- The individual local criminal justice agencies must also be fully committed to the project. This means that managers must be aware at all levels of the implications for their own work organisation and conduct. Methods of promoting the scheme in the agencies and communicating information to staff must be clearly defined and effective. Where take-up is exceptionally low, efforts should be made to investigate the reasons why.
- An independent consultant could be employed to work with LCJB members and staff to set up the scheme. Alternatively, the Board could liaise with WMCJB on tips on how the local scheme could be set up. Input from individual agencies is important in this process, to ensure that the scheme takes into consideration the different working practices and cultures within them.
- The local Board should give serious thoughts to employing an experienced consultant or training firm to deliver the training programmes for mentors and mentees. It is important that any consultant thus employed is knowledgeable about BME employment and confidence issues and is also experienced in running training courses which include participants varied in background, level of employment and knowledge. The consultant must have credibility and trust with the BME workforce in order that they will have confidence in the training and be willing to speak freely about their experiences and aspirations.
- The training course used for WMCJB's "Step Forward" was accorded high ratings both in feedback to the course and in interview comments to the evaluators. In order to reduce costs, the consultant concerned could be asked to design a package which could be implemented as a standard in rolled out schemes rather than employing a consultant for each course.
- Those responsible for implementation will require strong commitment to the scheme and need to be prepared to support trainees to overcome difficulties which

they may encounter, particularly in respect of problems in gaining release from current work to take up opportunities.

- It is essential that clear lines of communication are established between the Board officer responsible for implementation and representatives within the individual agencies. These representatives could be the Equality leads in the agencies, who could then take the role of agency project leaders. Information will need to be fed from the Board officer to the various project leaders to enable them promote the project well to eligible staff, to feedback to human resources departments on the involvement of individuals, to assist in negotiating with line managers concerning release from duties and obtaining attachment/secondment opportunities where necessary.
- It is important that publicity for the scheme is started well before the intended start date of the project and sufficient time is allowed for the application process.
- It is also important that information is publicised to managers as well as to potential candidates in order that they can accommodate candidates' release.
- It is vital that information about the scheme is promulgated in ways tailored to the individual agencies culture and systems. E.g. Emails may work for some and paper notices for others.
- The recruitment process for trainees and mentors used in WMCJB – information pack, application, short list and interview – appears to have worked well and could be used as a pattern in any roll out.
- It is helpful although not essential if mentors appointed have previous experience of mentoring. Training for mentors should concentrate on specific issues in relation to BME staff progression and retention and BME mentoring. Mentors interviewed generally found their prior experience of mentoring useful while also finding

valuable the additional elements provided by the “Step Forward” training. It is also desirable that mentors should be of sufficient seniority to facilitate their trainees’ development opportunities, although this role may be fulfilled by the LCJB officer responsible for implementation.

- It is important that the Board officer leading the project feeds back to agencies information about the involvement of members of their staff in the scheme. While it is an essential element of the scheme that it is open to all grades of staff and that employees do not have to seek their manager’s approval before applying, undue withholding of information because of confidentiality concerns benefits neither the trainee concerned nor their employer. Withholding information may mean that the employer has difficulty in managing workloads and that the trainee may encounter unnecessary obstacles.
- A further central feature of the scheme is that it is people centred. Project leaders need to ensure that career development for individuals on the scheme is planned in relation to the individual’s needs, and what the individual perceives as right for them. This approach must be respected both in the training course and in the matching of mentor/trainee pairs.
- In matching of mentor/trainee pairs project leaders need to take account of the needs of the trainee, both in attaining his/her goals and in addressing issues such as confidence. Pairings also need to consider personality clashes. The agency in which the individuals work may be of less importance than the ability of the mentor to motivate and the trainee to respond.
- It is important that the LCJB maintains records of the participants in the scheme. This will help to resolve difficulties such as those arising from changes of manager or sick leave. It will also provide a basis for monitoring of the progress of participants while on the scheme. If periodic follow up with participants is continued after the formal

scheme has finished, these records may also provide qualitative evidence of outcomes for individuals, and thus contribute to ongoing evaluation of effectiveness.

- It is important that LCJBs maintain quantitative data concerning BME staffing, progression and retention as required by the MDS in order that wider effects of such mentoring schemes can be measured.

## 2. Introduction

In 2008 West Midlands LCJB submitted an application to the Office for Criminal Justice Reform Race and Confidence Challenge Fund to develop and implement and commission an external evaluation of a BME staff progression pilot aimed at addressing the barriers to BME staff progression within the CJS in the West Midlands.

The bid was successful and the WMCJB established the “Step Forward” initiative as part of a wider BME staff engagement project the broad aims of which were the following;

- To improve the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff in local CJS agencies and so address their under-representation at senior levels;
- To increase the confidence of BME staff in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS and so encourage them to be prepared to speak positively about their own agency and the system as a whole.

The project was implemented in two stages. The key objectives of the first stage of the project were as follows;

- a. To promote the project across WMCJB member agencies in the most effective manner;
- b. To recruit and select a cohort of trainees and a pool of mentors /coaches;
- c. To design and deliver a personal and professional development training course for trainees recruited to the project;
  - i. to increase their awareness of their abilities and potential;
  - ii. to increase their confidence; and
  - iii. to enable them to develop additional skills and effective strategies to overcome barriers to career progression, and develop a personal action plan.
- d. To design and deliver a training course for mentors /coaches recruited to the project to enable them to provide effective one-to-one coaching and guidance to trainees based upon the career progression goals and personal action plans of the individuals they agree to mentor.

The second stage of the project was the provision of mentoring and shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities to trainees recruited in stage 1.

The research team was invited to tender for an evaluation of the project in August 2009.

The specific requirements of the evaluation were as follows:

- Assess the effectiveness of the methodology and delivery of the “Step Forward” project and make recommendations for improvement;
- Assess the extent to which the project has delivered its agreed aims and objectives;
- Assess the extent to which the project is a genuine method of improving the retention, and progression of BME staff in the CJS; (specifically how it can enable the LCJB to deliver against the PSA24 Indicator 4 “Identify and address race disproportionality in the CJS”);
- Research the existence of comparator models of mentoring projects in the CJS and identify good practice;
- Explore the potential of the initiative to improve BME staff confidence in the LCJB/ CJS;
- Explore the perceptions of LCJB Board members and CJS equality leads on the impact and effectiveness of the project;
- Identify how the project can be sustained and enhanced within the LCJB;
- Identify key points for the LCJB and OCJR, Race, Confidence and Justice Unit to consider in the event that a decision is made to replicate the mentoring project in other LCJB areas.

### **3. Methodology**

The evaluation included a review of documentation relating to the project and of literature concerning the use of coaching and mentoring schemes elsewhere in the CJS, interviews with participants, facilitators and Board members, and a focus group with the BME Advisory group.

#### **3.1. Review of documentation**

The starting point for the evaluation was a review of documentation. The documents initially supplied for review were:

1. Expressions of Interest form concerning an application to the Office for Criminal Justice Reform Race and Confidence Challenge Fund.
2. "Step Forward" – Interim (Phase 1) Report
3. "Step Forward" Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Staff Progression Pilot Project Analysis of responses to communication questionnaire
4. Lists of participants in the project – trainees, mentors and facilitators

At a later date, after discussion with the external facilitator, further documents were received. These were:

1. Shadowing opportunity agreement
2. Coaching/mentoring agreement
3. Profiles of participants
4. BME Staff Focus Groups Report (NCAF Training and Consultancy Services 2008)
5. West Midlands Criminal Justice Board BME Staff Advisory Group background, brief and terms of reference

As stated in Para 4.2 below the documentary evidence on which the evaluation was to be based was intended to include completed evaluation forms of participants, mentors and managers involved in shadowing, attachment and secondment. It was also to include monitoring and assessment documents completed by line managers of the participants. Neither of these types of document has been available. It is understood that there were

confidentiality issues. While the views of mentors and trainees were accessed by interview (see below), there is a gap in the evaluation relating to the views of line managers of the trainees and managers involved in the shadowing and attachment and secondment.

The aim of the documentation review was to assess the process of implementation, identify any problems which had been experienced, consider its effectiveness and inform the conduct of interviews.

### **3.2. Discussions/interviews with facilitators**

The documentary material was supplemented by discussions and semi structured interviews with the external consultant and the Equality and Diversity Manager involved in implementing the project for the WMCJB. An interview was also conducted with one individual agency's Equality and Diversity Advisor who had taken part in the recruitment process. These provided more detailed information concerning the implementation process.

### **3.3. Interviews with participants**

Seven interviews were conducted with trainees and four with mentors participating in the scheme. While the time available did not permit interviews of all participants, attempts were made to include trainees from different agencies, different levels of employment and both those who had had good experiences of the scheme and those who had encountered difficulties. Initially the external consultant provided information to assist in sampling those with differences in experiences of the scheme. However, in the end seven of the nine trainees were interviewed, one being omitted because circumstances unrelated to the project had delayed his start and the other proved difficult to contact. The interviews sought to explore the experience of the trainees on the scheme, including the effectiveness of the process and any problems encountered, and their views as to benefits gained by themselves and by BME staff in general.

Similarly the researchers sought to interview mentors from a range of agencies to explore their perceptions of the implementation of the scheme and the potential benefits to participants and to the BME workforce in general.

### **3.4. Focus group with BME Advisory Group**

A focus group was conducted at the scheduled BME Advisory Group Meeting in October 2009. At this meeting five group members were present representing the Prison Service, West Midlands Police, West Midlands HMCS and West Midlands Probation. There were no participants from CPS or YOS. The focus group considered members knowledge of the scheme and its potential benefits.

### **3.5. Interviews with WMCJ Board members**

Telephone interviews were carried out in November with five members of WMCJB to consider the extent of their knowledge of the programme and invite their comments on issues arising from the evaluation to date.

### **3.6. Review of the use of mentoring and coaching by other CJS agencies**

The review considered the approaches to staff mentoring commonly used by criminal justice agencies in the UK and abroad, highlighting their common features and approaches. The aim is to evaluate what approaches are taken with regard to BME staff mentoring (in any) and whether any examples of good practice could be cited.

## **4. The Project Implementation Process**

This section draws on documentary information provided to the evaluators and on discussions with the facilitators to describe the implementation process, together with comments made in in-house reports. It also includes comments made in the interviews and focus group about that process.

### **4.1. Background**

The background to the project was that during December 2007 and January 2008 the LCJB held five externally facilitated focus group events for BME managers, officers and admin/ancillary staff employed within CJS agencies in the West Midlands. Feedback from participants identified barriers to career progression and access to training opportunities as key issues affecting the confidence and retention of CJS BME staff in the area. Although there are differences between individual CJS agencies, current evidence indicated that the CJS within West Midlands reflects the national picture of under-representation of BME staff at senior levels. BME staff who attended the focus group events were consulted about the establishment of a positive action coaching and mentoring scheme. The overwhelming majority of BME officers and admin /ancillary staff were in favour of such a scheme as part of a strategy to address the career progression barriers that BME staff members allegedly face. They also expressed the view that the scheme would stand a greater chance of success if it was CJS-wide and was owned and developed by the LCJB. The majority of manager focus group participants were against the idea. There were concerns that such a scheme would reinforce negative perceptions about BME staff, in particular that they cannot make the grade on merit but have to rely on positive discrimination. If a positive action coaching scheme was adopted they felt that it should be organised within individual agencies, with a sharing of "best practice".

### **4.2. Planning the project**

The Expressions of Interest form states two areas of focus for the project under two of the OCJR's strategic priorities. These are:

- a) Staff Engagement: The project was to seek to improve staff knowledge and understanding of the CJS, to increase their confidence in its fairness and effectiveness, and so encourage them to be prepared to speak positively about their own agency and the system as a whole.
- b) Identifying and addressing race disproportionality: It was to seek to address the disproportionality evident in the rate of progression of BME staff within CJS agencies compared with their white counterparts and their under-representation at senior levels.

The project was a pilot scheme aimed at addressing barriers to BME staff progression within the West Midlands CJS. There were three elements to the project:

- Personal and professional development training for a group of BME staff drawn from the six main CJS agencies in the area, the purpose of which would be to increase participants' awareness of their abilities and potential, increase their confidence and enable them to develop additional skills, effective strategies to overcome barriers to career progression and a personal action plan.
- Recruiting and training a pool of experienced senior CJS staff to act as mentors to the BME staff participating in the pilot project. The mentors would receive training to enable them to provide effective one-to-one coaching and guidance to participants in relation to their career progression goals and personal action plan.
- Developing a CJS-wide programme of shadowing, attachment and secondment to provide participants with the additional practical experience they would require to progress within the CJS. Managers involved in the programme would be provided with training on the issues and barriers affecting BME progression to enable them to provide effective support to participants.

The implementation of the project was to be by an external consultant with a proven track record in this area of work and with credibility for BME staff. This consultant was to advise

the LCJB on the setting up of the mentoring and the shadowing, attachment and secondment programmes and to design and deliver the training of participants, mentors and managers to be involved in the individual programmes.

Provision was made for evaluation of the effectiveness of the project as follows:

- Participants, mentors and managers involved in the shadowing, attachment and secondment element would be required to complete detailed evaluation forms in respect of the training and the other elements of the project in which they are involved.
- Line managers of the participants would be required to monitor and assess the progress of participants involved in the project and to record the outcomes of this monitoring and assessment.
- There would be an independent evaluation of the project based upon documentary evidence (e.g. the completed evaluation forms and the line managers' monitoring and assessment) and interviews with participants, mentors and managers.

### **4.3. Project aims**

The broad aims of the project, as stated in the introduction to this report, are:

- 'To improve the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff in local CJS agencies and so address their under-representation at senior levels'
- 'To increase the confidence of BME staff in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS and so encourage them to be prepared to speak positively about their own agency and the system as a whole'

The Independent Consultant sees the scheme as essentially one of empowering people to help themselves rather than of making changes on behalf of the individual. He said:

*"Whereas the process, I believe quite correctly has been to try and empower and enable them to challenge with support if necessary but they must make the challenge themselves. If the process and the person doing that and learning from that is what in our view guarantees their onward progression after they leave the*

*scheme. I am quite prepared to intervene strategically at certain points but a fundamental part of this scheme is about empowering people so the obstacles that they will be confronted with they make the first move, we support and there are times when that support is quite upfront but we want to see the people grow in their strength and confidence.”*

#### **4.4. Programme content**

“Step Forward” is a pilot project with limited funding and initially a set number of places available, targeted at two BME staff from each CJS agency. Appendix 3 to the in house report on Phase 1 of the project provides a clear summary of the content of the “Step Forward” initiative through which it is proposed to address barriers to BME staff progression within the West Midlands CJS. It makes clear that the duration of each programme will be 6 months and that it is open to BME staff of all grades in the six main CJS agencies. It lists the detailed aims of “Step Forward” as to:

- Increase participants’ awareness of their abilities and potential, and their confidence;
- Enable them to develop additional skills, effective strategies to overcome barriers to career progression, and a personal action plan; and
- Provide them with the additional practical experience they would require to progress within the CJS.

The programme content for each participant will cover:

- Personal and professional development training, including the development of personal action plans that will form each participant’s framework for the outcomes of the programme
- One-to-one coaching and mentoring to support and inform the implementation of personal action plans
- Shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities to provide additional practical experience in relation to career progression goals

- Group 'Call – back' sessions at which participants will be able to share learning and support, and review the progress of the programme

Each participant will be expected to attend a three day training course, two half day 'call-back' sessions and six one to one coaching sessions. In addition there will be shadowing and secondment placements which will vary with participants' requirements and availability of placements.

For mentors / coaches the commitment required is:

- Attendance at a two-day training course
- Attendance at two half-day 'call – back' sessions
- Attendance at six one-to-one coaching sessions; we envisage that such sessions would held on a monthly basis and that each session would last approximately two hours

#### **4.5. Implementing the project (Phase 1)**

The "Step Forward" – Interim (Phase 1) Report indicates that after a successful bid the "Step Forward" project was established, with the external consultant starting work in September 2008. Funding from OCJR was supplemented by input from the LCJB, this having been agreed in April 2008. The consultant appointed was the same as had designed and reported on the Focus Group Consultation exercise at which the idea of the "Step Forward" project had been discussed and approved. The consultant has considerable experience in working with BME staff in challenging discrimination and in working with various CJS agencies and boards, thus having potential credibility with both managers and staff. The Phase 1 report provides detailed information about the early implementation of the project and has been the main foundation for the research team's work.

The Phase 1 report indicates that the progress of the project was delayed by the need to first establish the LCJB's BME Staff Advisory Group and by concerns regarding the ability of some of the agencies concerned to sustain the commitment that they had previously made to the project at a time of increasing financial and other resource pressures. However discussions with the external consultant have shown that there were also difficulties

because of staff changes within the LCJB, leading to a threat of lack of momentum for the project and, to defend against this threat, a greater than expected involvement of the external facilitator in the day to day implementation. The recruitment process was intended to take place in the winter of 2008/9. The short listing and interviews were to be conducted by a panel comprising an external training consultant, an officer of WMCJB and an Equality and Diversity manager from one of the six SJS agencies. The scheme was planned to begin with initial training for participants and mentor/coaches in March 2009.

The key objectives for the first phase of the project were:

- a. To promote the project across WMCJB member agencies in the most effective manner
- b. To recruit and select a cohort of trainees and a pool of mentors/coaches
- c. To design and deliver a personal and professional development training course for trainees recruited to the project (i) to increase their awareness of their abilities and potential; (ii) to increase their confidence; and (iii) to enable them to develop additional skills and effective strategies to overcome barriers to career progression, and develop a personal action plan
- d. To design and deliver a training course for mentors/coaches recruited to the project to enable them to provide effective one-to-one coaching and guidance to trainees based upon the career progression goals and personal action plans of the individuals they agree to mentor

The implementation of the project will be considered in the following sections in relation to the stated objectives of the first phase of the project.

#### **4.5.1 Objective A: Promotion across member agencies**

Working with the WMCJB Acting Equality and Diversity Manager, the Independent Consultant attended meetings of the WMCJB Equality and Diversity Group in September and November 2008, and the WMCJB BME Staff Advisory Group in October and December 2008 and January 2009. At these meetings he explained the background, aims and objectives of the project, and consult on the promotional strategy and material, and arrangements for the recruitment and selection of trainees and mentors/coaches. In the view of the external consultant the promotion of the initiative benefited greatly from the contributions made by

the Acting Equality and Diversity Manager and members of the above mentioned groups. Besides providing advice, their use of personal networks to disseminate information about the project and encourage applications from staff within their agencies was valuable. Members of the BME Advisory group felt that the group had played an important part in promoting the project. A comment was:

*“This group really has been key in driving that project initially in terms of reference and in terms of recruitment, selection procedures, in terms of trying to ascertain what some of the issue, obstacles and barriers were in respect of CJS agencies.”*

Documentation for prospective candidates about the project and detailing the application/selection procedures was, because of the delay mentioned above, only finalised for circulation within agencies shortly before Christmas 2008, not a good time because of the festive season. The WMCJB then circulated the advertisements and background information to Equality and Diversity Managers/Officers within member agencies with a request that they circulate the documents to all managers within their agency, and put the documents on their agency intranet and in any newsletters that their agency produces. The advertisements contained information about the background of the project, brief details of what the project would provide and an invitation to apply to participate or to volunteer to provide one-to-one coaching and mentoring. The background information covers six pages of details about what the project would provide and the time commitment expected from candidates. In addition, the WMCJB also circulated the same information to members of the BME Staff Advisory Group and individuals who had participated in the BME Staff Focus Groups. The accompanying email encouraged them to share the information with BME staff and other work colleagues in their agencies.

Individuals who expressed an interest in becoming a trainee or mentor/coach were sent an application pack containing the background document and the relevant application form. The initial deadline for receipt of completed applications was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

The WMCJB Project Administrator provided regular updates on the number of application packs requested and the number of applications received, and this information was shared

with members of the Equality and Diversity Group and the BME Staff Advisory Group as part of a strategy designed to encourage their active participation in the promotion of the initiative. In January 2009 members of the BME Staff Advisory Group reported gaps in the promotion of the project within certain agencies, and they suggested that the original deadline for applications ( 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009) should be extended. As a consequence, the deadline was extended to 10th February 2009 and further efforts were made to promote the project within the particular agencies identified by Advisory Group members and to encourage applications from staff in those organisations. Despite reported efforts by a number of individuals to secure wider circulation of information about the project, it became apparent from the relatively low number of applicants from some agencies (see para 4.6.3 below) and further enquiries amongst staff within agencies that a significant number of staff had not had access to the promotional material at all, or not until only very shortly before the closing date for applications. The phase 1 report states that feedback from members of the Advisory Group and other sources indicate that there were significant gaps in the promotional drive within some member agencies, and a wide disparity between agencies in relation to the cascading of information to BME staff. Focus group members felt that this was symptomatic of a lack of real buy in of senior management. The project is WMCJB supported and it might have been expected that impetus should have come from the Board. However, one Board member indicated that he had not been asked for advice about promotion within his agency. Other problems were suggested by those interviewed to have resulted from changes in staffing at WMCJB and a lack of commitment by some individual agencies' equality and diversity officers.

The LCJB took steps to discover the process of promoting the scheme across the agencies by conducting a survey of members of staff who requested an Information Pack from the LCJB and/or applied to become trainees/mentors, members of staff who had participated in the BME Staff Focus Groups held in December 2008/January 2009 and members of the BME Staff Advisory Group/ Equality & Diversity Enabling Group. It is not clear how many questionnaires were sent out but 19 were returned representing all six agencies in the LCJB but with nearly half from the Probation Service. Most of the probation respondents had first become aware of the project by direct contact with the LCJB but also reported seeing the information on the local intranet. One third of the probation respondents were aware of

information in newsletters and team meetings. The three police respondents had seen information on the intranet and two were aware of the project's promotion by BME staff representatives. Few respondents in other agencies were aware of publicity via intranets, newsletters or team meetings, promotion being mainly direct from the LCJB or from staff associations, notices in reception areas and contacts from managers. Seven of the probation respondents rated promotion of the scheme as good or average. Eight of those from other agencies rated it poor or very poor.

The plans for communicating to eligible staff about applying to participate in the Project had anticipated that information would appear on each agency's intranet, supported where practicable by entries in appropriate newsletters/internal briefings, and that it would also be cascaded down through organisations via normal line management channels. One of those interviewed suggested that the assumption that a communication system was in place in all agencies was unrealistic. In the event, in some agencies the information seems never to have appeared on their intranet, whilst in others it only appeared at a late stage in the process. There was fairly little supportive cascading activity in most agencies, and even where this did occur (e.g. within West Midlands Probation Area, where it was assisted by active Black Staff Groups), a significant proportion of eligible staff seems not to have seen the information at all or until they considered it too late for them to put together a credible application before the closing date. A focus group participant said:

*"I emailed some people on the ground floor of Birmingham obviously a region that "Step Forward" covered and said have you heard about this project and they said no, that told me that it didn't hit the ground floor and the person I emailed said she would have been very interested had she known about it."*

Interview comments have indicated that in some agencies there was a failure to post the information on the medium regarded as being most effective in reaching the workforce in general, this in spite of repeated reminders. Focus group participants felt that staff groups in agencies other than probation lacked leadership and *"that sends out a negative message to the Senior Officers within the service"*. There was also a suggestion that the disparity in the way that the scheme was promoted depended at least in part on the existence or otherwise of personal links between individuals. Several of those who did participate had first heard

about the scheme from their own managers, either via email, by a paper communication or by personal contact. However others interviewed suggested that reliance on emails is ineffective because staff receive too many emails and do not always read them.

**4.5.2 Objective B: recruitment and selection of a cohort of trainees and a pool of mentors/coaches**

Table 1 shows the results of the recruitment and selection process for participants and makes clear the disproportionate level of interest in the probation service, providing two thirds of initial interest. Apart from Probation Service, levels of initial interest seem to have been low. The research team lacks statistics about the relative sizes and levels of BME staffing in the six agencies, although it is understood anecdotally that the numbers are highest in West Midlands Police. It is understood that the LCJB holds no central record of this information and that individual agencies vary in the extent to which it is held at regional level. Some agencies hold data on BME staffing only at national level although the advent of the Minimum Data Set in April 2010 may remedy the situation. While the introduction of positive action measures depends only on the “reasonable appearance” of disproportionality in staff retention and progression, LCJB wide statistics would be a useful tool in not only measuring the current situation but also any change resulting from the introduction of measures such as “Step Forward”.

Table 1 Trainees recruited (Source ““Step Forward”” Interim Phase 1 Report)

Agency	Application packs requested & sent	Applications received	Shortlisted for interview	Selected
CPS	3	0	0	0
HMCS	6	5	3	2
HMPS	5	3	2	2
NPS	37	13	6	4
WMP	2	1	1	1
YOS	2	1	1	1
Totals	55	23	13	10

Several Board members interviewed considered that the level of interest shown from their agencies was lower than might have been expected from the numbers of BME staff. From comments made in para 4.6.2 it would seem that the interest displayed by probation staff is

the result of greater promotion of the scheme in that agency. The imbalance in interest between agencies is similar to that in the representation at the original Focus Groups which were thought to have resulted from communications issues. Since Focus Group participants were active in promoting “Step Forward” and since there was limited promotion on some agencies’ intranets and restricted cascading activity, it was not surprising, therefore, that despite strenuous efforts on the part of those directly involved in the recruitment and selection process for the project, there was a similar imbalance in requests for information packs and application forms.

Follow up of initial interest has varied between agencies. None of the CPS applicants proceeded to send in an application, only one third of the large NPS contingent but five of the six from HMCS. One of those interviewed pointed to additional problems restricting applications in some agencies. Firstly some would be wary of being involved in a positive action programme because of how it might be perceived by others because of the culture of the workplace. He said *“a BME positive action scheme is going to sit uncomfortably with a lot of staff”*. Other individuals might have been discouraged from applying because of workload pressure. A comment was:

*“Either they would not have even bothered to ask for the time off in terms of a resource because they know they wouldn’t get it or they would have asked for it but there would have been quite a short shift response.”*

Whilst the number of applicants from probation and HMCS led to a competitive selection process, the low number of applicants from others meant that they were not able to take up their full allocation of places. In fact the overall numbers of trainees form only 75% of the original target of 12 and only three agencies met their allocation of two trainees.

The assessment procedure was based on existing evidence of achievement, commitment to learning and development and career progression, and current personal development plans/objectives. One of those interviewed for the evaluation was surprised by the formality of the application process saying *“it was like going for a job”*. However another thought *“It was straightforward really, it was quite informal, I like the informal route”*. Generally however those interviewed had no problems with the recruitment process.

The spread of successful candidates across the agencies seems fair in relation to the differing levels of interest. It is unfortunate that there were no applications from CPS. There is a spread of employment types among the 10 selected candidates although seven are employed in 'admin/ancillary' grades. More than half the successful candidates were university graduates. Eight of the ten successful candidates are women and there was an equal split of 'Asian' and 'African Caribbean' ethnicities. It is not clear how this relates to the proportions in those who applied, or in proportions in the BME workforce of the West Midlands criminal justice agencies as a whole. Line managers agreed to the participation by all the successful candidates although it is understood that for NPS this also involved senior management intervention because of the higher number of successful candidates than had been allowed for from probation. It became apparent in the process of obtaining their agreement that many line managers were unaware of what was entailed in terms of expectations and time commitment of those involved, another result of the problems experienced in publicising the project.

Table 2 shows the results of the recruitment procedure for mentors/ coaches. Again over half the requests for packs and half the applications received were from the probation service with the police also showing significant interest. There was no interest at all from the Youth Offending Service. It is understood that the Youth Justice member of WMCJB was not consulted about publicising the scheme and that it did not receive a high profile in the Youth Offending Services. The applications were considered in relation to commitment to supporting learning and development, career progression and equal opportunities and previous coaching/mentoring experience. The eight successful candidates were drawn from only four agencies – CPS, HMCS, WMP and NPS. They were evenly divided in terms of gender. Four were 'Asian', two 'African Caribbean' and two 'White British'. The phase 1 report states that the pool of mentors/coaches is smaller than anticipated, at 8 only 50% of the maximum target set, although the backgrounds of the candidates were diverse and the commitment, skills and experience offered were as needed for the project. It is thought that the ethnic background of the mentors was regarded as less important than the skills they had to offer. No complaints were heard from trainees interviewed for the evaluation about the ethnicity of their mentor.

Table 2 Mentors/coaches recruited (Source “Step Forward” Interim Phase 1 Report)

Agency	Application packs requested & sent	Applications received	Shortlisted for interview	Selected
CPS	1	1	1	1
HMCS	1	2	2	2
HMPS	1	1	0	0
NPS	10	7	3	2
WMP	5	3	3	3
YOS	0	0	0	0
Totals	18	14	9	8

The WMCJB Equality and Diversity Manager reported at interview that reasons for not proceeding with an application after receiving the pack were followed up in a few cases. These included some enquiries seeking information in order to be aware of what was going on and an individual who thought of applying to be a mentor but then decided that it would take too much time. However she also said that there was also some evidence of managers differing in their encouragement or discouragement of potential applicants.

#### **4.5.3 Objective C: design and delivering of a personal and professional development training course for trainees recruited to the project**

The original dates for the course were rearranged because of problems with release from duty of two successful candidates. One of those interviewed said that both her line manager and team manager had initially refused permission for her to attend although negotiation resulted in her release. Although all candidates agreed to the revised dates, one candidate from the police did not attend, thus reducing the number of trainees on the scheme to 9.

The specific objectives of the course were:

- To increase participants’ confidence and awareness of their abilities and potential
- To assist participants to identify and explore issues affecting their career progression within the CJS
- To assist participants to develop effective strategies and personal action plans for career progression within the CJS

During the course of the three days, the following subjects were covered:

- Priority Action 4 of PSA 24
- Personal/Professional achievements, goal and ‘blocks’
- Rights and responsibilities under current anti – discrimination legislation
- Understanding and demonstrating competences
- Preparing progression/job applications
- Interview preparation and performance
- Reflecting on learning experiences
- The coaching/mentoring process
- Developing career progression strategies and personal action plans

Participants were encouraged to actively engage in learning through the use of case studies, small group discussions and a range of practical exercises. At the end of the course, each participant was invited to complete a customised evaluation form. The nine participants were overwhelmingly positive in their ratings of the course (Table3). The report also claims significant increases in the knowledge and understanding of the subjects covered. This was calculated by comparing average scores before and after the course as self assessed on the evaluation form completed by all participants. Responses to the question “what do you think you have learned from this training?” emphasised interview techniques, knowledge of rights and improved confidence. The question “how will you use this training in seeking to progress your career?” elicited general comments about putting the knowledge learned into practice, intentions to create a personal development plan and one specific intent to look for jobs in a new area of work. One trainee suggested meeting at the end of the programme to give feedback.

Table 3 Ratings of training course- trainees

The training course:	Number giving 90-100% rating
Achieved aims	7
Interesting	7
Clearly delivered	8
Met personal training objectives	8

The independent consultant was generally happy with the way the course had gone and the feedback he had received. He had however identified in his report on the phase 1 implementation some concerns in terms of staff awareness of ethnicity issues, but at the time of interview he had received no comment from the LCJB either requesting more information or potential areas for action. All those interviewed felt that they had benefitted from the course although one would have liked it to be a week rather than three days. The benefits mentioned included gaining knowledge about interview techniques and employment rights, gaining confidence from presenting to the group their own experience and qualifications, developing a focus for development and the support derived from networking with others. Comments included:

*“We did a lot of sharing ideas and through everyone speaking out saying what they had done and the feedback you got from the rest of the group made you realise actually what I have done is quite important and I am good at this and that.”*

*“In terms of looking at things like interview skills and the legislation in regard to the achievement of black and minority ethnic groups in the workplace. Raising awareness of that because it’s not something you really hear anywhere else.”*

*“we had to set goals and write down our goals and where we want to be in a year’s time and had to do a presentation on what our goals were and how we are going to go about achieving them and set time limits.”*

*“It made me more aware of what I am capable of and what skills I do have.”*

*“It helped me immensely. We were taught that if we had a problem and there was an obstacle to break that obstacle down and instead of going in guns blazing think about what options you have, how you can approach it, how friends and colleagues can help you as well. That was very good, knowing it’s not you by yourself, there is a network of support.”*

#### **4.5.4 Objective D: design and deliver a training course for mentors/coaches recruited to the project**

The original plan for a two day course was modified because of one successful candidate's lack of availability for two days and because of the prior experience of coaching/mentoring in all the successful candidates. In the event one candidate was unable to attend at all and another had to leave early. Seven candidates therefore attended the whole or most of the course.

The objectives of the course were:

- To increase participants' understanding of their role in the "Step Forward" programme, and
- To assist participants in relation to the provision of effective one-to-one coaching and guidance to "Step Forward" Trainees'

The course programme covered the following subjects:

- Key Priority Action 4 of PSA 24
- Common 'blocks' to BME staff progression
- Anti – discrimination legislation – rights and responsibilities
- Managing the coaching/mentoring process
- Encouraging learning
- Reviewing progress
- Next steps

Again, participants were encouraged to actively engage in learning through the use of case studies, small group discussions and a range of practical exercises. The independent consultant felt that the participants showed ability and commitment to carry out the role of mentor. At the end of the course, each participant was invited to complete a customised evaluation form. The seven participants were generally positive in their ratings of the course (Table 4). Comparisons of the scores before and after on the evaluation forms showed that, as for the trainees' course, there were increases in the knowledge and understanding of the subjects. These were however less pronounced than for the trainees. This should not be a

surprise since those in more senior positions would be expected to have some knowledge of the subjects covered.

Table 4 Ratings of training course – mentors/coaches

The training course:	Assessment range
Achieved aims	80-100%
Interesting	70-100%
Clearly delivered	80-100%
Met personal training objectives	70-100%

Comments referred to increasing clarity or being a refresher/reminder of skills previously learned rather than imparting entirely new information. Others mentioned improving the awareness of the expectation of the scheme. One individual proposed a mid programme review to monitor needs for both mentors/coaches and mentees. At the focus group a participant said: *“The training course itself was two days I think and I found it really helpful, useful because this supported some of the training I had already had.”* That individual found an emphasis on confidence and relationship building in the training important to his role as a mentor.

The phase 1 report expressed concern about the level of awareness among local CJS managers and staff regarding “‘Key Priority Action 4’ of PSA 24 and rights and responsibilities under anti – discrimination legislation”. The report concluded that “a lack of awareness among managers and staff in relation to those matters will undoubtedly hamper the WMCJB in meeting the challenges posed by PSA 24, particularly those relating to identifying and reducing unjustified race disproportionality; for example, the collection of reliable staff ethnicity monitoring data will require the cooperation of managers and staff at all levels within local CJS agencies, and such cooperation is more likely to be forthcoming if those managers and staff are made aware of, and *understand*, the context and purpose of the monitoring exercise.”

#### **4.6. Implementing the project (Phase 2)**

The next stage of the project is described at the end of the phase 1 report. It is said to have the following objectives:

- Establishing coaching/mentoring arrangements for all trainees (by end of April 2009)
- Enabling each trainee to have at least six one-to-one coaching/mentoring sessions (April 2009 to September 2009)
- Enabling shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities to meet the needs identified in trainees' personal action plans (June 2009 to September 2009)
- Providing training and/or guidance to managers involved in the shadowing, attachment and secondment programme to enable them to provide effective support to trainees (May 2009 to June 2009)
- Organising and facilitating two 'call-back' workshops for trainees and mentors/coaches (1st workshop late June/early July 2009; 2nd workshop by the end of September 2009)
- Providing ongoing support for trainees, mentors/coaches and managers on an individual basis (April 2009 – September 2009)

The research team has seen no documentary records regarding the establishment of the coaching and mentoring pairs and the process of mentoring operation but has derived information from discussions and an interview with the independent consultant and interviews with the Acting Equality and Diversity Manager, mentors and trainees.

#### **4.6.1 Mentoring**

There were nine successful candidates and seven mentors appointed. This means that some mentors were asked to work with two trainees, and two in fact did so. At interview the independent consultant said that the matching of the trainees with candidates considered the personal action plans of the trainees and also personality issues, such as the existence of factors which might hinder the development of a relationship. Some trainees were readily assigned to a particular mentor because their PDP indicated progression within a particular agency and a mentor from that agency was available. Some trainees had less developed ideas with more uncertainty and were matched with a mentor who *“had the particular skills, some might call them soft skills to assist the person to think through what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they really enjoy”* in order to identify a way forward. He continued *“It was those types of things, a combination of the trainees' goals and also the*

*personal issues, whether it be confidence, some of the trainees had identified confidence issues, so there are certain coach mentors that you could see that person could really help the trainee work on his confidence. The starting point is the goal but there are other needs that we looked at.*” Only one mentor/trainee partnership was within the same agency but trainees interviewed had not found that important.

The independent consultant felt that the pairings had worked well, although some better than others. Most of those interviewed confirmed this belief. For example one said *“she has been very supportive and very helpful.”* One of those interviewed had experienced temporary communication problems with her mentor but these had been resolved by the intervention of the independent consultant and by the time of the interview she was enthusiastic, saying:

*“What we realised is that we are both compatible. Very open, very task orientated, for me its like bullet point lists, action lists and that is exactly what my mentor is like as well. ... She was very good, very, very young and she .. was trying to explain that it’s not always easy but you have to work towards it. You have to want it. She’s excellent like that, I couldn’t fault her at all. It wasn’t just about my mentoring; on a personal note as well we used to discuss things that were going on at home as well so we had a relationship that way.”*

Trainees and mentors interviewed had had between two and six mentoring sessions. Since the scheme envisaged a monthly meeting for six months, some trainees have not received the support that was intended. Although one trainee is at an early stage because of problems unrelated to “Step Forward” delaying his start on the project, another of the mentor/trainee pairings was felt by the trainee to be inappropriate and to have provided little benefit in the two sessions. It would be inappropriate of the evaluation to attempt to give reasons for the failure but contributory factors suggested have been difficulty in finding accommodation in which the mentoring sessions could take place and the mentor’s other commitments. However other pairings have overcome such difficulties. The lesson to be learned here is perhaps that mentor/trainee progress should be monitored and efforts made to clear practical difficulties. Where the pairings are found to be unsuccessful, for

more complex or intractable reasons, it may be better to discontinue the scheme for that individual or make an alternative pairing.

#### **4.6.2. Shadowing, attachment and secondment**

There have been more problems with this element of the scheme. In some instances it has been straightforward with the mentors working with the trainee to identify opportunities for shadowing, attachment and secondment. One mentor gave the trainee a name and a phone number and trainee made the approach. Another coach mentor used his own contacts to make the placement. The independent consultant thought that in about one third of cases there have been difficulties and he had had to become involved to broker arrangements. In other cases the local Equality and Diversity Officer had intervened. These problems were generally because a trainee wished to take up a shadowing, secondment or attachment opportunity in an agency other than that in which he/she currently worked. These have included cases where the agency employing the trainee was willing to release the trainee to take up an opportunity but the agency required to provide an opportunity for a particular individual was unwilling. A mentor said that he had been unable to secure an attachment for his trainee by formal routes and had had to resort to informal contacts in the agency concerned, which was not his own. For another case the host agency was happy to accept the placement but the trainee's parent agency was unwilling to give release from her normal work. One of those interviewed had had difficulties when a line manager was sick and more senior managers lacked knowledge about the scheme and were slow to come to a decision about allowing her to take up an opportunity offered. Another trainee was doing her shadowing and attachment in her own time and was experiencing difficulties in obtaining release for a secondment opportunity.

The plan for the project specified that "Managers involved in the programme would be provided with training on the issues and barriers affecting BME progression to enable them to provide effective support to participants." See para 4.2 above. The evaluators are not aware that any such training took place. If it had some of the difficulties experienced may have been avoided.

However one trainee's PDP led to a difficulty unforeseen at the project's start. True inter-agency working may convince CJS agencies that providing development opportunities to staff who wish to move to another agency is worthwhile. One trainee on the pilot programme identified that she wished to leave the CJS altogether and therefore wished to be released to take up opportunities elsewhere in the labour market. If "Step Forward" is to continue, a clear policy must be formulated to deal with such a situation and this made clear to candidates at the recruitment stage.

There are potential difficulties because the project is a little behind and has extended for more than the six month period specified in the Phase 1 report (para 4.4 above) in that agencies could be unwilling to honour arrangements. The independent consultant feels that it important that delays are not used to excuse fulfilment of the scheme and intends to pursue difficult cases.

Where trainees had been able to take up opportunities in shadowing and attachment they felt that the experience had helped them and the one individual who has obtained a secondment for 2-5 years was enthusiastic.

## 5. Review of the use of mentoring and coaching by CJS agencies

There is a strong tradition of staff mentoring within the criminal justice system. All the criminal justice agencies in the UK have various mentoring schemes in place for staff. Generally seen as a key area of staff development, mentoring is often encouraged for new staff as a key element of staff induction programmes. Mentoring new staff during training and during the early days of their career is common (see in relation to magistrates: HMCS, 2006; 2009). Non-regular staff working within criminal justice system are also mentored; for example victim support volunteers (see Avon and Somerset Court Board, 2007). The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has a mentoring policy that is applied to:

“All new appointments with the CPS, including temporary and fixed term appointments (unless they have already satisfactorily completed their probation with a Civil Service Department and there has been no break in service). It also applies to those who are reinstated or re-employed or those transferring from a Non-Departmental Public Body” (CPS Probation Policy 2007: p. 3)

Similarly, the Probation Service provides mentoring to people within 3 broad categories:

- People in the community who have expressed an interest in joining the Probation Service
- New members of staff, including Trainee Probation Officers and anyone returning to the Service after a significant absence
- Existing staff who are in transition from one post to another, are considering leaving the Service, or are wanting it as an aspect of general career development

For new staff, the aims of mentoring vary with the goals of the organisation but generally they include:

- To allow a smooth transition into the department as well as a greater understanding of the organization’s culture and goals, including the qualities, skills and attitudes that are essential for performing a job well.

- To assist in setting goals, avoiding pitfalls and growing professionally through real life examples and guidance provided by experienced colleagues (mentors)
- To support, assist and develop self-confidence in their jobs as well as build a sense of loyalty to the organisation.

The mentoring of new staff is essentially a developmental and learning technique aimed at increasing personal capacity. Mentees gain invaluable insight beyond their own experience and are given the opportunity to enhance their own work skills and identify future career goals within the organization. The ultimate goals of mentoring are to increase employee retention along with increased job satisfaction and, as a consequence, improve staff and organisational performance.

However, mentoring is not used exclusively for new staff. It could also be part of a package for existing staff moving into new posts or new departments within the agency or a new area of work or responsibility that requires the acquisition of new skills (e.g. managers). As indicated above, mentoring could also be used for those considering leaving the agency (retention) or those who want it as an aspect of career development or progression.

As an example, most police forces in the UK have mentoring schemes in place for existing staff joining specialist units such as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), to help them acquire the new skills, competences and knowledge essential for their job as crime investigators. For example, in the Merseyside Police, trainee detectives in the CID have tutor detectives assigned to them, who act as mentor and coach (see HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008a). Similarly, Cheshire Police has a mentoring scheme as part of the training programme for their Force Incident Managers (FIMs) and Senior Investigating officers (SIOs)(HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008b; see also HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2005; 2008c) Mentoring in CIDs take the form of “shadowing” colleagues, to ensure that specific policing tasks are carried out properly; in other words, a form of scrutiny and oversight (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008c). It can also be a means of peer support. For example, in the West Mercia Constabulary, SIOs provide informal peer mentor support to each other, which includes “reviewing colleagues’ policy books and

decisions in the first few days of an investigation” (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008d: p. 55).

Most criminal justice staff mentoring schemes are informal but not necessarily unstructured. Most of them are in-house, usually between colleagues in the same department, including those who have recently joined a department. However, there are no set down rules that mentors and mentees must belong to the same department, although the preference is for this to be the case. Some police forces in the USA match mentees with mentors from a different department within the organization; the rationale being that the mentee would have a greater confidence in the objectivity and advice of the mentor, knowing that the mentor is not someone who will supervise them or even work directly with them on their shift (see Blue Springs Police Department: <http://www.calea.org/online/newsletter/no88/recruitpeer.htm>). Similarly, within the UK police forces, mentoring can take place across departments within an agency. In the West Midlands Police, for example, senior investigation officers (SIOs) from the Major investigation Unit (MIU) assist and mentor OCU-based [Operational Command Unit] SIOs, “to ensure that the investigation is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the *Murder Investigation Manual*.” (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008e: p. 17).

Mentoring schemes also exist across county boundaries but only within an agency. For example, within HMCS, opportunities exist for senior staff (managers) in one county to be mentored by others from another county within a set Group of Courts. (See for example County Courts 2007 – 2008a and b). However, there are no inter-agency provisions for staff mentoring between the criminal justice agencies in the UK. The obvious explanation is the perception that each agency is different in terms of working culture and required skills. Whilst some of the skills acquired in one agency may be transferable to another agency, transferring from one agency to another will not normally be seen as an area of career development needing mentoring. Instead, it is most likely to be seen as a career change. In other words, mentoring is not currently available for those wanting to move to a different agency as a form of career development.

Mentors are usually selected because of their experience and also on the basis of their past exemplary performance, positive attitude and understanding of the mission and values of the agency. The methods used for introducing mentoring to staff varies from a blanket offer to all new staff to a formal offer to those progressing to new (higher) posts or those wanting mentoring in order to achieve a particular goal or aid their progression within the agency. In some police departments in the USA there are mentoring committees that match mentees with 'suitable' mentors. In the UK the decision to be a mentor or mentee is voluntary and the matching does not have to be formal. However, a mentor-mentee match may be induced, where, for example, a particular mentor or mentoring style is required in order to attain the development needs identified in the mentee's Personal Development Plan (PDP) or Appraisal Form. Generally, employees cannot initiate their own mentoring independent of the agency's laid-down formal rules and procedures.

There are no specific requirements that mentors in criminal justice agencies should be trained. Most mentors are not trained as their roles are often undefined. However, some agencies do provide training for their mentors. For example, in 2008, Durham Constabulary, had plans to provide a two-day mentors' course to NVQ level for its staff (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008f). Most mentor training schemes are in-house, although some agencies have used external consultants or training agencies to train their mentors. This is often the case, however, where the mentor's role requires understanding of specific (sensitive) issues that should impact upon the mentoring process beyond the 'coaching' and 'shadowing', for example, diversity issues. Mentees themselves do not have to undergo any training on what is required of them as mentees. There is usually no formal preparation or training for being a mentee.

The relationship between a mentor and mentee is confidential and the terms of the relationship are not 'set in stone'. However, some criminal justice agencies in the USA allow mentors to report to management where there are issues of serious concern resulting from the mentoring. Some schemes in that country also allow for the monitoring of the mentoring system to ensure that everything is going well for the mentee. A mentor or mentee can request to be assigned to a new person if either of them feel that the "pairing" is not compatible. In addition, some schemes lay down the duties and responsibilities of the

mentor and mentee within the relationship and require mentors (and mentees) to write reports on their experience with their mentees so that the programme can be evaluated. However, the mentor does not evaluate performance. The key words in a mentoring scheme are: “support, encourage, guide and assist”

### **5.1 Equality, Diversity and ‘Race’ Issues in staff mentoring.**

Whereas most criminal justice agencies in the UK mention mentoring as a key staffing activity (see for example HMCS Birmingham etc 2006, CPS Probation Policy, op.cit), there is not much information on whether this applies to all staff, including those in clerical and administration duties. It can only be assumed that, at least, all new staff are eligible for some kind of mentoring by line managers or immediate superiors. However, there is no literature on or evidence of mentoring of clerical and administration staff for the purpose of retention or whether where a clerical staff has identified progression to a non-clerical post within the agency as a career development, mentoring is available to facilitate that goal.

With regard to diversity, all the criminal justice agencies in the UK have policies on the recruitment and retention of staff from underrepresented groups but not much development has occurred in this area, or, perhaps, in the pipeline for most agencies. For example, Lincolnshire Police had plans in 2008 to establish a formal mentoring scheme for their female staff (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2008g). Whereas ‘race’ is often seen as a key diversity issue in staffing, more so since the Macpherson report and other reports preceding it (for example, the Scarman Report, 1981), not much has been done within the criminal justice agencies in terms of the retention and progression of minority ethnic staff working within the criminal justice system. The *Race Relations Act 1976* provides, among other things, that where members of particular racial groups have been under-represented over the previous twelve months in particular work, employers may encourage them to take advantage of opportunities for doing that work or to provide training to help them attain the skills needed for it. In spite of this legal provision, very few of the criminal justice agencies have mentoring schemes specifically for minority groups to enable them achieve progression within their various agencies or be retained. Unless ‘race’ is identified as an area of concern, for example in terms of meeting diversity targets in the workforce, most

agencies will most likely not see the need to establish a separate mentoring scheme for their BME staff. The police and probation are exceptions in this regard. Most police forces and probation departments have mentoring projects for BME staff. This is because these agencies have very strong BME staff associations that promote BME issues within their agencies. Other criminal justice agencies with no BME staff representation do take BME issue seriously but do not have specific mentoring schemes for their BME staff to aid their progression or retention.

A recent Home Office report on minority ethnic recruitment, retention and progression in the police service, states in relation to progression that whereas mentoring programmes could help individuals to cope with barriers to progression, “there is a potential lack of interventions which attempt to remove the organisational and institutional barriers where these exist” (Home Office, 2008: p. 4). One of the recommendations of this report is that “Each force would have a positive action initiative whereby Sergeants, Chief Inspectors, Superintendents and ACPO ranks provide the opportunity to adopt minority ethnic officers to mentor” (Ibid: p. 9) However, this scheme is to be linked to the national Police Improvement Agency (NPIA)’s strategy in “developing officers to understand key roles” (Ibid).

In summary, there is recognition among criminal justice agencies of the importance of mentoring as a means of staff development but this is often seen in the context of a general duty of employers to all employees. Mentoring schemes are generally within agencies. There is no evidence of cross-agency mentoring although mentoring can take place across counties, where such is within the same agency. There is a clear legal case for supporting staff from underrepresented groups to attain job satisfaction and career goals. A mentoring scheme specifically tailored to the needs of such staff could go a long way in addressing the imbalance in staffing. However, whilst all the criminal justice agencies in the UK accept, in principle, the need to address diversity (including ‘race’) issues in staffing, very few of them have mentoring schemes in place that truly respect diversity.

## **6. Assessment of the effectiveness of the methodology and delivery of the “Step Forward” project**

The evaluation was required to assess the effectiveness of the methodology and delivery of the “Step Forward” project. The “Step Forward” project has brought together the six criminal justice agencies in a programme of staff development which has involved cross agency working. Nine trainees from four agencies have worked with seven mentors from four agencies. In the roles together all six agencies were represented.

The implementation of the scheme has been effected successfully, although not without difficulties which will be detailed later in this section. The independent consultant appointed to implement the project has been instrumental in achieving that success. His commitment and knowledge of the issues involved has been a major advantage in implementation. The planned elements of the programme have taken place although sometimes with some departures from the intended time scale. The participants were recruited, although not as many as had been hoped or from the complete range of agencies in both roles. The training courses were successfully accomplished, with participants generally finding the content useful. Mentors and trainees have generally met regularly, although the number of sessions and the success of the mentoring relationship have varied. Some mentors have gone out of their way to continue the mentoring after their own career change or used their own contacts to progress their mentee’s plans. At the time of the interviews one call back session had been held.

### **6.1 Strengths**

Individuals interviewed and taking part in the focus group identified a number of strengths as follows:

#### **6.1.1. Open to all grades**

Both managers and participants interviewed considered that while the individual agencies run mentoring schemes, these are generally directed at professional and management grades. As was shown in Section 5, however, literature indicates that other agencies have

formal mentoring schemes for new officers. The distinctive feature of “Step Forward” is said to be that it is open to all BME staff including those in lower grades or in administrative and clerical roles, as had been suggested by the BME Staff Focus Groups in 2007-8. Interview comments included:

*“A lot of people in administration do not have the opportunities to progress in administration or any other area”.*

*“It’s open to all BME staff not just to particular grades, not just the managers.”*

However, mentoring and even shadowing of new clerical and administrative staff is common in most organisations, although not formally as in the “Step Forward” scheme. Focusing on BME staff alone is not a distinctive feature as the police and Probation have mentoring schemes for BME staff. Perhaps the distinctive feature is that “Step Forward” provides mentoring with the specific purpose to aid progression and retention for administrative and clerical staff.

#### **6.1.2. Permission not required**

Focus group participants and trainees felt that another important element of “Step Forward” is that staff were able to apply to go on the scheme without asking the permission of line or other managers. One of the trainees said *“One thing that attracted me was that I didn’t have to ask anybody’s permission to apply.”*

#### **6.1.3. Flexibility**

Participants pointed to the flexibility of the scheme as being a strength in that the programmes are individually tailored to individuals and do not have to follow a prescribed path. Comments included:

*“Flexibility....in terms of it not being prescriptive, in terms of the path that people can follow. It’s flexible, it’s person orientated as opposed to organisational needs orientated.”*

*“I think it offers a range of opportunities which again aren’t there in lots of other mentoring schemes. The notion of a more flexible shadowing kind of experience that fits the individual.”*

One of the focus group participants said *“in terms of this scheme ..... there’s a certain amount of understanding to be able to produce a bespoke training programme for this individual to maybe target the different elements that they are unsure of.”*

The independent consultant pointed to a different form of flexibility in the freedom accorded to the scheme by the LCJB to develop. This resulted from the lack of WMCJB staff involved in implementing the project after the early planning process and resultant lack of drive from the Board. However, while these features may have given freedom to work in his own way, they also had consequences which prejudiced the scheme’s chances of success, as described later in this section.

#### **6.1.4. Independent implementation**

Participants have expressed appreciation of the way in which the independent consultant has implemented the scheme and provided support. Some have felt that the fact that he is external to the LCJB provides benefits in allowing frank discussion without fear of reports back to managers and in providing a fresh outlook. One of those interviewed was clear that the approach of the consultant on “Step Forward” was in itself a strength because *“his words are so positive and so empowering.”*

#### **6.1.5. Mentor quality**

Participants considered that the calibre of those acting as mentors on the scheme was high. They were from a good cross section of the CJS, were in positions in which they were able to facilitate opportunities for their mentees and besides their expertise in the CJS also offered “soft” skills in confidence building and self assessment for those whose early career progression ideas were less certain. Trainees were generally very satisfied with their mentors, one individual saying:

*“One to one mentoring is really (good) and if somebody finds a good mentor like I did I think that’s really good.”*

### **6.1.6. Networking experience**

Trainees pointed to the opportunity that had been provided by the scheme to meet with staff from other agencies and backgrounds and learn from others' experience. Comments included:

*"We said for all of us it was a networking experience as well whereas before it was just me and Probation, now I have networked with the Police and with people from the Courts from the Prisons and it's been very, very good for all of us."*

*"even aspects like making mentoring opportunities, network opportunities to meet with other people and what they do and we still have that kind of bond where we still communicate by email and plan to meet up and that's really beneficial."*

*"The opportunity for people with agencies to meet with people of other agencies and get a wider perspective. It always benefits to talk to other people, to learn from other people."*

## **6.2 Criticisms**

The evaluators have identified from the review of documentation, interviews and focus group weaknesses in the methodology and implementation of the project in a number of areas. Some of these have already been discussed in the previous section but are summarised below for clarity.

### **6.2.1. Implementation at LCJB level rather than by individual agencies**

While trainees on the scheme appreciated the benefits that a cross agency scheme provided in widening knowledge and networking, one equality and diversity officer thought that single agency schemes would have greater chance of success. He said:

*"if they are based on the quango type organisation like the CJB's I'm not quite sure if they have the credibility. For example if there was an internal (agency)*

*BME mentoring scheme I think that would be more successful for example than a CJB BME mentoring scheme taking place in establishments.”*

#### **6.2.2. Problems in the initial promotion of the scheme**

There were problems in the early promotion of the scheme as discussed above in the timing of the advertisement and the channels through which it was promoted. The agencies varied in the extent to which the scheme was advertised on intranets which had been the main planned promotion method. Some staff did not become aware of the scheme until near the application deadline or not at all. Even in the agency which showed the most interest, those interviewed have said that there was less awareness among those in administrative grades and that individual line managers played a large part in drawing attention to the opportunity.

#### **6.2.3. Lack of a full range cross agency of participants**

There was a low rate of applications in relation to estimated numbers of BME staff in the workforce, particularly in some agencies. This, together with the withdrawal from the training courses of two successful applicants, meant that the groups of both trainees and mentors taking part in the project were smaller than planned and did not include, for the trainees, police and CPS staff and, for the mentors, YOS and HMPS.

#### **6.2.4. Questions over the suitability of all trainees/mentors**

The selection process of the trainees and mentors was conducted by the independent consultant with input from equality and diversity staff. As previously stated, the assessment procedure was based on existing evidence of achievement, commitment to learning and development and career progression, and current personal development plans/objectives. However one Board member interviewed suggested that this had resulted in an individual being accepted as a trainee who would not have been thought suitable by the agency in which that trainee was currently working. He suggested that the existing advertisement of the scheme to all to apply should continue as that was valued by present participants. However agencies should have input to the selection at the short-listing stage, probably from Human Resources departments.

### **6.2.5. The mentoring relationship**

Two mentors accepted each two trainees for mentoring but a third mentor was unable to commit time for more than one trainee. Although the independent consultant expressed appreciation of the quality of the mentoring, the number of mentoring sessions among those interviewed varied from two to six out of a planned six, suggesting that the relationship in the pairings has not always been successful. One trainee was not happy with his mentor. For mentoring to work, both partners in the mentoring need to expend effort. One of those interviewed thought that some of the mentors were not at a sufficiently senior level.

### **6.2.6. Monitoring of the mentoring process**

One of those interviewed suggested that there was insufficient monitoring of the mentoring and shadowing and attachment stages but that the pairs of mentor/trainee were left to work alone. This individual felt that his mentoring experience was not beneficial and that completion of monitoring returns to the project management might have improved matters. While no monitoring returns have been provided to the evaluators, it is their impression that the independent consultant has monitored the implementation of the scheme regularly in an informal way. However some kind of return by mentors about their contacts with their trainees might, particularly if the project were to be implemented more widely, be a useful contributor to evaluation of process. In addition, an equality officer indicated that proper records had not been kept by the "Step Forward" project and that had hampered resolution of implementation problems. He said:

*"With regard to that specific issue I think it could have been managed more quickly if somebody within the CJB and the administrator had retained some documentation."*

### **6.2.7. Failure to inform agencies of participation in the scheme by their staff members**

In interviews with board members and equality officers it has been alleged that agencies were not informed of the participation of particular members of staff in the "Step Forward"

scheme. It was expected that human resources staff would have been informed. Comments were:

*“I have not seen anything ever that says these two people were selected, this is where they will be, this is the timetable of events, this is what they require, none of that is around.”*

*“We need to make sure that someone is able to communicate to the HR function within that particular establishment or that particular department so that they know actually what’s going on. It needs putting on that person’s personnel file, so any such issues such as our mentee, straight away are advised you ask the HR manager to ensure personnel has an audit trail and it’s all agreed and all approved.”*

#### **6.2.8. Problems in securing inter agency opportunities for shadowing, attachment and secondment and release of staff to take up those opportunities**

Some of those interviewed pointed to problems where career paths identified by individuals had required movement between agencies. These have included finding opportunities for a trainee in a different agency and release of the trainee to take up the opportunity once an opening is obtained. These started with the training courses whose dates had been advertised from the start of the scheme but where participants could not be available in the event. The result was the withdrawal from the project of one mentor and one trainee as already mentioned, both of these being from WMP. As the mentoring was established, some trainees experienced difficulties in obtaining permission to attend the sessions and some have attended the meetings in their own time. Similarly managers of some trainees have been reluctant to release staff for shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities, which of course are a greater time commitment and may have substantial impact on workplace management. Again some individuals have used their own time, when employed part time, or used leave to take up these opportunities.

One of those interviewed said that in one case *“there were some very unreasonable blockages taking place with that individual which we managed to resolve....It was basically blocked by the HR function within that establishment.”*

One reason for the problems encountered may have been that it was not anticipated that so many trainees would want to move across agencies and that this need to be given more consideration in the planning stage. Some comments from those interviewed were:

*“I also think that the CJS needs to be more ready to think about people moving between agencies which I know is difficult particularly in the current climate.”*

*“I don’t think there’s necessarily an awareness or commitment to developing outside or to a different organisation.”*

It has also been perceived by those interviewed that the implications of a scheme like “Step Forward” have not always been made clear to operational managers who have to ensure that work is completed.

#### **6.2.9. The length of the scheme**

Five of the trainees thought that the scheme should be longer, and that a year would provide more room to take advantage of the mentoring relationship and to see change. Comments included:

*“I think 12 months would be maybe be a better opportunity to get everything in, like all your shadowing opportunities, gives you more xxx time to get used to your mentor and settled into that and I think that would have been better over a longer time.”*

*“I think then you would be able to see everybody’s journeys a bit clearer over 12 months.”*

*“probably 12 months because you can see, in 12 months you can see the change, in 6 months not a lot happens in 6 months. Whereas with 12 months you can say a year ago I was here and here I am now, so I do think it could be a lot longer.”*

#### **6.2.10. Positive discrimination**

One individual at the focus group and one of those interviewed pointed to the potential problem in a positive action scheme in the perception of positive discrimination among other staff and managers.

### **6.3 Underlying problems**

Some of these weaknesses are seen to be rooted in underlying problems.

#### **6.3.1. LCJB support**

The WMCJB backed the scheme and committed funding to its implementation but appear to have failed to appreciate the need for ongoing support while that implementation took place. Board members interviewed have suggested that the “Step Forward” project has not figured on agendas during its implementation but only at its inception. It is accepted that LCJBs have numerous responsibilities but lack the structures to enable them to execute all the tasks involved. The evaluators accept that recent staff changes have impacted on WMCJB. These involved a change in the business manager, maternity leave of the Equality and Diversity manager, time lapses in the appointment of both the business manager replacement and the temporary maternity cover and the eventual departure of the Equality and Diversity Manager. These mean that there has been little LCJB internal administrative support to the project for much of its life and it has depended heavily on the input of the external consultant. It must be pointed out that a project which is not properly resourced is unlikely to succeed. In the case of “Step Forward” the efforts of the Independent Consultant have kept the project substantially on track but an external consultant is an expensive input which cannot be relied upon for the continuation of the scheme. The lack of WMCJB staffing also means that there has been a lack of internal WMCJB drive for the project and the project has been less able to take advantage of local contacts and linkages.

The lack of WMCJB drive for the project may be an underlying cause of the promotion difficulties and those involving the release of staff to take up opportunities. In the words of one of those interviewed, it is important

*“that the organisation staff give a very, very clear message from the top down that this is a programme we support, we expect managers to support, to explore it with relevant staff, we expect managers to encourage staff who are interested.”*

### **6.3.2. Management commitment**

It is understood that senior management in the six agencies expressed early support for the project. However the problems experienced as described above in promotion and release of staff suggest that the commitment was not cascaded down through staff meetings and briefings to operational managers. A clear policy is required to resolve the potential conflict of operational priorities with the implementation of a scheme which is intended to occupy the work time of its participants. The scheme’s design was not for conduct in participants’ own time although it is to the credit of some who have been willing to do this. The BME Focus group report (p28) showed that focus group participants felt from the start that a positive coaching and mentoring scheme could not succeed without management investment and resource and freeing up staff to attend. One of those interviewed also suggested that there was limited buy in to the project from Equality and Diversity leads in the agencies, but possible reasons for this have not been clear to the evaluators.

Some of the comments of those contacted for the evaluation were:

*“There wasn’t an importance tied onto this scheme, so because there was no importance tied onto it they didn’t seek to disseminate it to the staff and that’s the staff on the shop floor, the staff who actually do want to progress.”*

*“I think the only improvements that are going to come are possibly for senior management to buy in perhaps a little more committedly rather than paying it lip service.”*

*“It needs to filter down and to local managers in particular need to buy in to it because they are the ones who are going to operationally release staff or not release them.”*

*“How much do Heads of Service know about it, I suspect they don’t know much about it and certainly not talking about it being high on their list of priorities.”*

### **6.3.3. Finance**

Some of those interviewed suggested that the “Step Forward” scheme has been implemented at a time of financial constraint when agencies have been struggling to carry out their work against a background of cuts. This has not helped the implementation of positive schemes which require staff to have time out from their regular work.

A mentor interviewed said *“these days things always revolve around finance and the flesh may be willing but the bank balance may not allow it.”*

### **6.3.4. Publicity**

Those interviewed generally felt that there was little awareness of the project in their parent agencies either among BME staff or among the workforce and management as a whole. The early promotion of the scheme had only limited success and there has been little or no publicity since the start of the scheme. One mentor said *“I wouldn’t say I was aware of any particular publicity or wider knowledge about what we do.”*

It is important that schemes such as “Step Forward” are seen to provide benefit to individual participants in furthering their progression, confidence and job satisfaction. It is also important to make clear the benefits to agencies in making the most of their employees’ talents, improving the contentment of the workforce and increasing confidence of staff in the criminal justice system. The number of individuals actively participating in such intensive schemes will necessarily small but the benefits to staff and agencies can be increased by positive publicity.

## 7. Perceived and potential impacts

This section is based on comments made at interview and in the BME Advisory focus group. The evaluators are required to assess the extent to which the project has delivered its agreed aims and objectives. They are to explore the potential of the initiative to improve BME staff confidence in the LCJB/ CJS and the perceptions of LCJB Board members and CJS equality leads on the impact and effectiveness of the project. They are to assess the extent to which the project is a genuine method of improving the retention, and progression of BME staff in the CJS; (specifically how it can enable the LCJB to deliver against the PSA24 Indicator 4 “Identify and address race disproportionality in the CJS”).

A primary aim of “Step Forward” is to improve the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff in local CJS agencies and so address their under-representation at senior levels. Interim objectives are to:

- Increase participants’ awareness of their abilities and potential, and their confidence;
- Enable them to develop additional skills, effective strategies to overcome barriers to career progression, and a personal action plan; and
- Provide them with the additional practical experience they would require to progress within the CJS.

It is too early to consider whether the scheme has impacted on staff progression for the trainees but the perceptions of those involved suggest that the scheme has the potential to do so. It is to be hoped that WMCJB will maintain contact with the participants in order to monitor ongoing effects.

A further overall aim of “Step Forward” is ‘To increase the confidence of BME staff in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS and so encourage them to be prepared to speak positively about their own agency and the system as a whole’ .

The following paragraphs detail impacts experienced by present participants, evidence of effects on BME staff in the agencies generally and opinions as to potential impact on BME

staff progression and BME confidence in the criminal justice system. Also suggested are perceptions of the value and effectiveness of the scheme identified by some board members, equality leads and WMCJB facilitators interviewed.

## **7.1 Evidence of impact on present participants**

The Independent Consultant felt that all the trainees had benefitted except for one, for whom there were questions about the degree to which the person was taking responsibility for his/her own progression. For the others, the benefits were in four areas.

### **7.1.1. Confidence**

The independent consultant felt that most of the trainees were more confident and more assertive now in terms of pursuing their professional development. Focus group participants also pointed to confidence as a key benefit. One of the trainees said *“the whole process made me aware of that, which I have built in confidence because I am just like if I want to do something I will just go out there and try and do something about it rather than sitting around and waiting for it to happen. It helps you to focus on what you want to do.”*

One trainee interviewed felt immediate benefits from the initial training course saying:

*“I reflected on myself personally after those 3 days, it made me a lot stronger, a lot more confident”*

In respect of her experience on the scheme as a whole she said:

*“It’s made me a lot stronger, made me a lot more confident knowing if you want to achieve something you can. It might be a struggle but you will get to the top of that ladder. It is achievable.”*

Another said *“helping people to build up their confidence like training, given the opportunity to lecture on suitable subjects, which I think can boost somebody’s confidence.”*

Others identified improved confidence from the mentoring process. One said *“My confidence has built a lot through my mentoring sessions and I have gone for things and looked at things differently and thought about things that I wouldn’t have necessarily thought about before.”*

Those interviewed pointed to differing benefits of the scheme which had increased confidence in participants.

These included:

- Awareness of their rights
- Feelings of achievement in getting through the selection process onto the scheme
- Support from the independent consultant and others to challenge blocks and barriers
- Support from other participants

Some comments were:

*“One or two of them has been given a boost by seeing someone going in to bat for them in certain situations and seeing their rights upheld.”* (Independent Facilitator)

*“So many people went for it and only a handful got it. So I felt quite privileged”* (trainee)

*“I think if I wasn’t on this training then I would have this problem of you are going to lose your job X, Y Z, I think I would have fallen apart. I didn’t, (independent consultant) was there, the other delegates were there for me”* (trainee)

### **7.1.2. Knowledge**

Those interviewed felt that “Step Forward” had given them improved knowledge in two main areas; employment rights and procedure and the wider criminal justice system, outside their own particular work area. Comments included:

*“It’s opened my eyes to a lot actually and in regards to even legislation and rights at work”*

*“It makes you more aware of what actually is available in the CJ area”*

*“Having the chance to see it from a different perspective, just to spend say a week with the Police or a week at the Courts seeing actually what they have to go through so then ... it helps you do your job a little bit differently and better as well, because you have seen everything.”*

Knowledge of the wider CJS was felt to improve their potential performance at work, even if they in the end stayed in the same area of work.

### **7.1.3. Personal development**

The independent consultant said *“From my own point of view I have seen some people grow.”* More importantly, participants in the scheme suggested that they had developed through being on the programme. Comments included:

*“I think it has developed me as a person. I think I am not as naïve as I was.”*

*“It’s helped me and it’s helped me also in terms of my personal development to see that there other things that you can do and that I don’t have to get stuck in one job and stuck in one position, I can actually .. choose.”*

The development was partly in terms of confidence as previously discussed but also in learning to break down goals into small achievable steps. As well as learning from mentors, participants had also learned from sharing experiences with others and exchanging information. This has enabled them to *“do something you that you think you can’t do.”*

One mentor pointed to improved self value for himself because he had been able to assist someone else.

### **7.1.4. Goal achievement**

Each trainee on the scheme set their own goals as part of the PDP that they produced on the training course. Although a little over six months after the start of the mentoring is too early to expect staff progression among trainees on the scheme, the independent

consultant felt that progress had been made for some. He said *“some of them have actually achieved their goals or gone a long way towards achieving their goals and actually got posts, so that’s had an impact on them.”* The Acting Equality and Diversity manager pointed to one individual who had *“gone from admin to a direct operational role which is not always easy to do. So having the opportunity to shadow and find out more about that has been an important element in that because the competition is tough to make that move these days.”*

Some trainees who had not as yet made career changes had been given the opportunity to prepare for a move and improve prospects of success in any future application. One had with her mentor *“researched application forms, job specifications and basically tried to come up with questions and answers that would probably come up in an interview. So I think that if a post was available I would be prepared for and trying for that post.”*

## **7.2 Impacts on BME workforce in WMCJS generally**

Although the scheme has been running for little more than six months there is anecdotal evidence from conversations with the independent consultant that at least parts of the BME workforce are aware of the scheme and that it is perceived to be beneficial. He said *“I think it is very localised but I am certain that there will be one or two people who are encouraged by seeing their colleagues progress and certainly within probation there are quite a number of people who will see it as a very desirable thing and that are miffed that some very undeserving people got the thing. It’s the kind of thing that tells you whether something is valued.”*

The Acting Equality and Diversity Manager felt that it was important that BME staff should hear from their peers about successes of the scheme rather than from management as this would be more readily believed and assimilated. It is understood that at the feedback session, trainees suggested that they should actively promote and act as champions for the scheme.

One of the trainees interviewed felt that BME employees in general know little about the scheme. However she felt that the scheme may have shown to white members of staff that

discriminatory behaviour is not acceptable and the Equality and diversity manager pointed to anecdotal evidence from conversations of influence on senior managers in some agencies.

A focus group participant suggested that the recent proliferation of mentoring schemes in individual agencies could be an effect of the reputation of “Step Forward” although these may well have been independently set in hand and others have indicated that they existed prior to “Step Forward” but with less universal application.

### **7.3 Potential effect on BME staff progression and retention**

Inevitably, the numbers that can go through a scheme such as “Step Forward” will be small and therefore alone the programme cannot affect BME staff progression greatly. An equality officer expressed his doubts about the scheme, saying:

*“I find it difficult to see real organization change take place because of small isolated mentoring schemes.”*

The Independent consultant believes however that the programme is an essential part of what should be a coordinated approach. In his view the “Step Forward” positive action, training and encouragement needs to be accompanied by *“the careful monitoring of progression within the organisation and other practical measures to eliminate some of the obstacles, the unfair and discriminatory obstacles that are put in the way of staff.”*

One of those interviewed thought the scheme had potential to affect BME staff progression but with a proviso. She said *“If you have a supportive line manager and you have a supportive team then yes you can move forward. When senior staff are aware of the difficulties that you are coming across, then yes.”*

Another said that the scheme *“definitely”* had potential to improve retention and progression of BME staff and a third that this was *“because it makes you more aware of what actually is available in the CJ area”*. Another thought it was particularly valuable for admin staff for whom there were fewer opportunities. She said:

*"I do think your progression has to come from yourself but it also helps if you have support behind you. Overall I do think it's a really positive scheme that could help a lot of people."*

#### **7.4 Potential effect on BME confidence in the CJS/LCJB**

Both the managers involved in implementing "Step Forward" thought that the project had the potential to improve BME confidence in the criminal justice system. The independent consultant said *"The more people you put through it, the more people succeed the more ambassadors you have, the more it raises confidence and confidence is an infectious thing."*

The Acting Equality and Diversity Manager said:

*"I think it's got the potential to improve confidence across the board really. It's not the only thing, there are lots of other things in terms of extent of service users but it's an important part of it."*

A trainee on the scheme thought that "Step Forward" could improve confidence *"definitely, if it's rolled out and people are aware of it and take the opportunity, definitely."*

The Independent Consultant pointed to a boost in confidence by BME staff in probation as a result of the agency's response to the "Step Forward" project. He said:

*"When it came down to a situation there was a request to increase the number of disciplines because of the strength of probation applications, they responded positively and said, "yes, we will support four instead of two". Those are practical things that people, see, hear about and they have received a bounce in terms of the confidence of the BME staff in that agency and indeed some degree of pride that their organisation can be seen to be leading the way on these issues."*

Generally trainees interviewed did not express opinions about the impact of "Step Forward" on confidence in the LCJB, most seeing the CJS in terms of individual agencies rather than as a joint board. Board members interviewed said that lack of board visibility was a problem which they were trying to address. One commented:

*“Most people actually don’t understand what the local CJB is about and CJS, we have to be (better) at that, we have already set down having our meetings to change that”.*

An equality officer commented:

*“Which does lead onto another issue and that’s about knowledge and awareness of the CJB amongst the actual agencies themselves, I think I can pretty much guarantee if I mention the CJB to a member of staff in the prison just behind me they wouldn’t know a thing.”*

## **7.5 Potential benefits to agencies**

Mentors interviewed saw benefits to managers in greater awareness of the criminal justice system as a whole and in greater staff motivation. Comments included:

*“it makes managers aware that there is other potential outside of your own organisation and that overall by making people aware of what other agencies actually do there’s a better appreciation .”*

*“if staff are motivated then, as a manager I want someone who is motivated so it’s going to benefit me.”*

## 8. Conclusions

In establishing the “Step Forward” pilot WMCJB has taken a significant step towards improving progression and retention for BME staff in the area. Most of those who expressed views to the evaluators, while seeing flaws in the project as it has been implemented in the pilot, regard the scheme as valuable to both individuals, providing benefits to the staff concerned themselves and to organisations, with potential benefits to the CJS agencies as employers. Comments included:

*“I support the scheme, I think does provide opportunities for people within different parts of the CJS to actually move around and possible move where their best talents lay, and achievements from both sides, from the employers point of view equally, access to staff otherwise would not have had.”*

*“I think it should be rolled out nationally, I think it’s very beneficial and I think it might be something that could be offered to people a little bit earlier in their careers.”*

*“It gives people from ethnic minorities a great opportunity really to develop themselves and further their career. It is a great opportunity for development really in terms of their career progression.”*

Only one individual expressed doubts as to the value of mentoring schemes in general and in particular as implemented by an overarching board rather than within individual agencies. Most were clear of the benefits to the CJS in the agencies operating together although there were difficulties in achieving completely successful partnership.

“Step Forward” was devised and funding obtained at a time when WMCJB had in post a business manager and an equality and diversity manager. Implementation was intended to be by these individuals together with an independent consultant. No Board member was asked to take particular responsibility for the scheme. When the business manager moved on, the diversity manager took maternity leave and there was delay in appointing a temporary replacement, impetus for the scheme was lost. On her return to work the

diversity manager had other work commitments which took priority and eventually left. The independent consultant took a larger part in the implementation than he had expected, and did in fact informally monitor the mentoring and intervene to resolve difficulties in mentoring, shadowing, attachment and secondment. There have been advantages in his relationship with the trainees because he is independent, and they feel they can talk freely. There have also been possible advantages in his position outside the CJS management structure in negotiating with agencies. However his position as an independent also means that he may lack knowledge of, and contacts and authority in, the West Midlands criminal justice agencies. If "Step Forward" is to continue, it is essential that WMCJB takes ownership of the scheme by appointing a board member as Champion and a board officer to be responsible for implementation.

Participants in the scheme have received benefits, although these vary in type and degree between individuals. The external consultant felt that eight of the nine trainees had benefited. The trainees themselves felt that they had gained in confidence and were more fitted to challenge any perceived discrimination that they encountered. The trainees had been supported to develop personal action plans and some individuals have been able to take successful action to further those plans in shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities. The working of trainees from one agency with mentors from another has increased the knowledge on both sides about the criminal justice system as a whole.

It is too early to assess whether the project has delivered its aim of improving staff progression and retention and in fact at present it is not clear that statistical data are available to evidence this. However the project has provided additional skills, knowledge and experience for some of the trainees participating. It follows that wider implementation of a similar scheme could, potentially, have positive effects on progression for the BME workforce in general. The potential of the initiative to improve BME staff confidence in the LCJB/ CJS is probably limited in that only a few individuals have participated in the project and there has been little or no publicity. Even if the scheme were to be continued with further cohorts, the numbers involved would be unlikely to have substantial effect on BME confidence generally but could contribute to a general confidence programme.

The evaluation was also asked to consider how the “Step Forward” project can enable the LCJB to deliver against the PSA24 Indicator 4 “Identify and address race disproportionality in the CJS”. The project does not in itself identify disproportionality although it can and has identified discriminatory blocks for particular individuals which may lead to disproportionality. Evidence of disproportionality must be obtained generally by other methods such as the preparation of statistics relating to proportions of BME staff at differing levels of the workforce. In the view of the evaluators this type of information is essential not only in fulfilling PSA responsibilities but in conducting future outcome evaluations of such projects as “Step Forward”. It is clear that a scheme such as “Step Forward” can have only a limited impact on disproportionality in the CJS agencies as only a small number of individuals benefit directly. However the project could have wider impacts on behaviour of other staff and management but only if the scheme is widely publicised. Similarly, the potential of the initiative to improve BME staff confidence in the LCJB/ CJS is limited if confined to participants but potentially greater if BME staff generally are made aware of the opportunities provided.

Review of existing models within the criminal justice agencies showed that mentoring is largely in-house. Whereas mentoring is provided for all new staff, there is little evidence that it features strategically in the policies on retention and progression of clerical and administration staff. Most formal mentoring schemes aimed at progression and retention of staff are for ‘operational’ staff, especially those moving into new or managerial roles requiring the acquisition of new skills; but not specifically for BME staff or other ‘underrepresented’ groups within the workforce. However, the Police and the Probation Service appear to have some BME mentoring schemes. It is also revealed that opportunities to move (progress) from one agency into another agencies do not exist, although staff in one branch of an agency could be mentored by colleagues from another branch.

## **9. Recommendations for sustaining and enhancing the project in WMCJB**

### **Strategic Direction and Administration**

#### **Recommendation 1 WMCJB should retain the “Step Forward” scheme within the West Midlands area**

Considering the benefits of the scheme outlined in this report and in order to comply with Key Priority Action 4 of PSA 24 it is recommended that the WMCJB retains the “Step Forward” scheme as a multi-agency county-wide mentoring scheme for BME employees within the CJS. The Board may consider the extension of the scheme to other ‘underrepresented’ groups within the criminal justice workforce.

#### **Recommendation 2 WMCJB should appoint a Board member to be a Champion for the scheme**

Implementation of “Step Forward” to date has suffered from problems of communication and requires more positive leadership. It is therefore recommended that a particular board member should be made responsible for the project becoming a “Step Forward” Champion. Appointment of a Champion will ensure that “Step Forward” remains in focus and is not lost in the busy agenda of the Board. The Champion would report to the Board on progress and problems encountered, ensuring that other board members were aware of the project and could feed back information to the agencies they represent. The Champion would also be the point of contact for those implementing the project if difficulties necessitate intervention at senior level. Some of those interviewed agreed that this was the way forward. One comment was:

*“By a Board champion I mean an enthusiastic committed member of the Board who is going to do whatever it takes to make sure that his or her agency and all the other agencies live up to the commitment in terms of cascading information, in terms of responding to placement requests and so on.”*

**Recommendation 3 WMCJB should appoint a board manager with responsibility for the scheme**

Implementation to date has been hampered by the lack of a manager within WMCJB for much of the “Step Forward” implementation period. It is essential that there should be a manager within WMCJB, with responsibility for overall management and routine administration of the project. It is expected that this could be within the remit of the existing Diversity Officer. The manager should ensure that mentoring arrangements are monitored and maintain project documentation. The manager should also provide services such as arranging meetings and booking rooms.

Most of those interviewed, while appreciating the commitment and special knowledge of the consultant and recognising the value that an independent person can bring in lack of local bias or influences, thought that a continuation of the scheme within the Board would need the input from a manager who, like the independent consultant, is committed and determined to overcome obstacles. The employment of an external consultant on a permanent basis to manage the scheme as for the pilot is not recommended as it may be too costly. However it is suggested that some input of the independent consultant may be needed to mentor the manager during the period of transfer of responsibilities.

**Recommendation 4 The Board should hold a strategic meeting to consider how the scheme is to be fully developed.**

An Action Plan is essential to provide direction on what needs to be done or structures that need to be put in place for the scheme to work effectively and who should be accountable or responsible for the different stages of the Plan.

**Recommendation 5 A blueprint document of the scheme should be published as a Board document.**

In addition, if possible, the Board could commission, with the approval of the independent consultant, the publication of the training manuals used by the consultant for the training of mentors and mentees. These documents would be invaluable resource to other LCJBs intending to set up their own schemes and could be sold to interested Boards for a small fee.

## **Promoting the Scheme**

### **Recommendation 6 WMCJB should work closely with Equality leads in the six agencies**

There should be closer working relationship between the WMLCJB and the Equality Leads in the six agencies, in order to promote and facilitate the continuation of the scheme.

### **Recommendation 7 WMCJB should be aware that the methodology of promoting the scheme will need to vary between agencies**

In the process of promoting the scheme, the Board should be aware of the different occupational cultures and systems within the six agencies and ensure that the scheme is tailored to the needs of individual agencies in order to ensure maximum effect. A one size fits all approach is unlikely to be effective. This may be achieved through closer working with agency equality leads (Recommendation 5).

### **Recommendation 8 WMCJB should consider holding open events about the scheme**

Open events for BME staff are a possible means of increasing awareness of the scheme and potential recruitment. These could be centrally organised by WMCJB but would probably be more accessible if held within the separate agencies. The events should include presentations from trainees who have passed through the scheme and opportunities for informal questioning.

### **Recommendation 9 WMCJB should consider producing post project publicity about the scheme.**

This could include, with the permission and cooperation of participants, accounts of experiences on the scheme and perceptions of benefits and progress made. This would have the dual potential to raise awareness for future operation of the scheme and improve confidence among BME staff.

## **Communication**

**Recommendation 10 WMCJB must ensure that appropriate measures are taken to cascade down information about the scheme to the agencies and the agencies themselves must pass this information to staff through briefings and staff meetings**

It is clear that senior managers at WMCJB level are aware of the scheme and agreed its establishment as a pilot. However it appears that information about the existence of the scheme was not cascaded down in all agencies to operational line managers. Operational line managers will need to take into account workload implications in order to be able to release staff to take part in the scheme.

Information given to line managers must emphasise not only the benefits of the scheme to individual BME staff but also the benefits to the agency with regard to maximising the potential, motivation and confidence in the CJS of the BME workforce.

**Recommendation 11 WMCJB should consider holding briefing sessions for line managers of candidates on the scheme**

In order to ensure that local managers of successful candidates are fully aware of the implications of the scheme, briefing sessions before the trainee starts may be beneficial.

**Scheme conduct**

**Recommendation 12 WMCJB should ensure that the content of the “Step Forward” training courses provides the trainees with relevant information and is conducted in such a way that trainees can benefit. It is essential that the courses are quality assured and comparable with established training courses in staff mentoring.**

The training course has been an essential element of the project in providing information on legislation and good practice, and in introducing the “Step Forward” process. However the training has also been designed to encourage learning and to assist trainees to plan their development. Trainees on the scheme have referred to increased confidence as an early result of the training, arising from group discussions and practical exercises.

**Recommendation 13 Considering the fact that the independent consultant who delivered the training programmes during the pilot is a person with requisite knowledge in employment and BME issues and has the ability to relate to diverse groups of trainees with varying backgrounds, knowledge and expectations, WMCJB should ensure that an external consultant with similar credentials is engaged to conduct future training programmes.**

The external input to the pilot project training has been valuable in providing special knowledge and expertise and a fresh and unbiased viewpoint outside the management structure of the LCJB. It is essential that the consultant employed by WMCJB for future training has the necessary expertise and credibility. However, the development of a national training package which could be rolled out locally might reduce costs (see Key points for replication below).

**Recommendation 14 WMCJB should consider including more group meetings of mentors and trainees on the scheme**

Group meetings of mentors and trainees in a scheme cohort may prove beneficial in exchange of experience and networking. It is understood that one meeting which took place because of a visit from OCJR was found helpful by participants and this could usefully be repeated, perhaps quarterly.

**Recommendation 15 WMCJB should consider extending the mentoring period from six to 12 months**

Trainees on the scheme felt that one year would be a more appropriate period in which to fully take advantage of the mentoring relationship and to see change. A 12 month period of one session per month should not impact too greatly on operational priorities and would provide time to take up attachment and secondment opportunities and possibly see career progress.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Recommendation 16 WMCJB should maintain contact with trainees after the scheme to monitor their progress**

The long term effect on participants' staff progression and retention can only be ascertained if some monitoring of their future activity is carried out. This could be quite informal by telephone.

**Recommendation 17 WMCJB should ensure that records are maintained concerning those on the scheme**

Documentation is required in order that information can be supplied to the individual CJS agencies for the purposes of effective personnel management, guarding against difficulties caused by changes in managers, and be used for future evaluation of impact on the BME workforce. Records should include documentation concerning the application, permissions obtained from managers, progress of monitoring (e.g. sessions achieved), shadowing, attachment and secondment opportunities offered and taken up and any difficulties experienced.

**Recommendation 18 WMCJB should ensure that statistics relating to BME staffing are collected at LCJB level.**

The assessment of the long term effectiveness of schemes such as “Step Forward” in respect of the BME workforce as a whole can only be effected if statistics relating to proportion of BME staff, levels of appointment, retention and progression are maintained. In any LCJB initiative as in this project these are required at LCJB level. However, the MDS and Employment Diagnostic Tools should be ready and possibly in use by mid-next year and will provide an important tool currently lacking.

## **10. Key points to note if scheme is to be replicated in other LCJB areas**

- 10.1** The LCJB concerned must show strong commitment to the project by appointing a Board Champion and a Board officer to take responsibility for implementing and overseeing the development of the scheme. The Board officer should take on the role of project coordinator. The need to deliver against indicator 4 of PSA24 should take priority over any other local reasons for introducing the scheme.
- 10.2** The individual local criminal justice agencies must also be fully committed to the project. This means that managers must be aware at all levels of the implications for their own work organisation and conduct. Methods of promoting the scheme in the agencies and communicating information to staff must be clearly defined and effective. Where take-up is exceptionally low, efforts should be made to investigate the reasons why.
- 10.3** An independent consultant could be employed to work with LCJB members and staff to set up the scheme. Alternatively, the Board could liaise with WMCJB on tips on how the local scheme could be set up. Input from individual agencies is important in this process, to ensure that the scheme takes into consideration the different working practices and cultures within them.
- 10.4** The local Board should give serious thoughts to employing an experienced consultant or training firm to deliver the training programmes for mentors and mentees. It is important that any consultant thus employed is knowledgeable about BME employment and confidence issues and is also experienced in running training courses which include participants varied in background, level of employment and knowledge. The consultant must have credibility and trust with the BME workforce in order that they will have confidence in the training and be willing to speak freely about their experiences and aspirations.

- 10.5** The training course used for WMCJB's "Step Forward" was accorded high ratings both in feedback to the course and in interview comments to the evaluators. In order to reduce costs, the consultant concerned could be asked to design a package which could be implemented as a standard in rolled out schemes rather than employing a consultant for each course.
- 10.6** Those responsible for implementation will require strong commitment to the scheme and need to be prepared to support trainees to overcome difficulties which they may encounter, particularly in respect of problems in gaining release from current work to take up opportunities.
- 10.7** It is essential that clear lines of communication are established between the Board officer responsible for implementation and representatives within the individual agencies. These representatives could be the Equality leads in the agencies, who could then take the role of agency project leaders. Information will need to be fed from the Board officer to the various project leaders to enable them promote the project well to eligible staff, to feedback to human resources departments on the involvement of individuals, to assist in negotiating with line managers concerning release from duties and obtaining attachment/secondment opportunities where necessary.
- 10.8** It is important that publicity for the scheme is started well before the intended start date of the project and sufficient time is allowed for the application process.
- 10.9** It is also important that information is publicised to managers as well as to potential candidates in order that they can accommodate candidates' release.
- 10.10** It is vital that information about the scheme is promulgated in ways tailored to the individual agencies culture and systems. E.g. Emails may work for some and paper notices for others.

- 10.11** The recruitment process for trainees and mentors used in WMCJB – information pack, application, short list and interview – appears to have worked well and could be used as a pattern in any roll out.
- 10.12** It is helpful although not essential if mentors appointed have previous experience of mentoring. Training for mentors should concentrate on specific issues in relation to BME staff progression and retention and BME mentoring. Mentors interviewed generally found their prior experience of mentoring useful while also finding valuable the additional elements provided by the “Step Forward” training. It is also desirable that mentors should be of sufficient seniority to facilitate their trainees’ development opportunities, although this role may be fulfilled by the LCJB officer responsible for implementation.
- 10.13** It is important that the Board officer leading the project feeds back to agencies information about the involvement of members of their staff in the scheme. While it is an essential element of the scheme that it is open to all grades of staff and that employees do not have to seek their manager’s approval before applying, undue withholding of information because of confidentiality concerns benefits neither the trainee concerned nor their employer. Withholding information may mean that the employer has difficulty in managing workloads and that the trainee may encounter unnecessary obstacles.
- 10.14** A further central feature of the scheme is that it is people centred. Project leaders need to ensure that career development for individuals on the scheme is planned in relation to the individual’s needs, and what the individual perceives as right for them. This approach must be respected both in the training course and in the matching of mentor/trainee pairs.
- 10.15** In matching of mentor/trainee pairs project leaders need to take account of the needs of the trainee, both in attaining his/her goals and in addressing issues such as confidence. Pairings also need to consider personality clashes. The agency in

which the individuals work may be of less importance than the ability of the mentor to motivate and the trainee to respond.

**10.16** It is important that the LCJB maintains records of the participants in the scheme. This will help to resolve difficulties such as those arising from changes of manager or sick leave. It will also provide a basis for monitoring of the progress of participants while on the scheme. If periodic follow up with participants is continued after the formal scheme has finished, these records may also provide qualitative evidence of outcomes for individuals, and thus contribute to ongoing evaluation of effectiveness.

**10.17** It is important that LCJBs maintain quantitative data concerning BME staffing, progression and retention as required by the MDS in order that wider effects of such mentoring schemes can be measured.

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# Sheffield Hallam University

*West Midland's LCJB's BME staff progressions (Step Forward) pilot scheme*

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