

## **Round table meeting to present and discuss the Transitions & Arcadis 6-month placement programme: Accessing skills of Refugee Engineers.**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018 2-4pm, Royal Academy of Engineering

Thank you to The Academy for hosting this meeting, and to Helen McCarthy of Arcadis and the Transitions placementee for sharing their experiences. Slides for all presentations will be available soon on the Transitions website.

### **Bola Fatimilehin, Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Royal Academy of Engineering**

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- Engineering is a huge sector. The Academy needs to partner with organisations such as Transitions in order to address diversity and inclusion across the sector.
- Culture is paramount: need to develop an organisational culture in which diversity, and all engineers, can thrive. Recent research (surveying 7k engineers) has helped to develop a business case for tackling diversity and inclusion.
- The data challenge: there isn't the level of data required to enable the most effective monitoring of progression in relation to equality.
- Engineering Engagement Programme: work on how to keep graduates in engineering (25% BAME engineering university students, 6% in industry. 16% female engineering students, 9% in industry.)

Q: Does The Academy work in schools?

A: No, mapping showed 600+ organisations already working in schools, whereas no-one was working with the professional institutions. No-one else is bringing graduates together with a diversity focus.

### **Helen McCarthy, People Director, Arcadis**

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Post-presentation questions and comments:

Q: Do most Transitions candidates have skills which can be mapped to UK-SPEC?

A: Yes, usually the biggest challenge is not around skills but relates to business culture.

Comments from attendees:

How can diverse procurement be embedded in the recruitment process? How can this be encouraged? Need to make sure that there's more of a commitment in tenders than just "we would like to see". Starting to see this. A higher proportion of bid scores relate to diversity.

Unlikely to be long before govt formalises social value in large-scale public procurement. Biggest challenge remains the talent pool available.

How can our businesses reflect the community we live in?

People who are procuring need to be more intelligent in the questions they ask.

What opportunity do SMEs have to be socially responsible? Can be very challenging – each employee has to be directly involved in the product. No resources available for anyone to be carried. Unable to provide some of the support on offer by larger business (learning academy intranet, for example). But can small companies be more agile? A fancy intranet with lots of L&D not needed: a great line manager makes the difference. Need to have the passion.

## **Presentation by Transitions candidate currently on Arcadis placement**

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Post-presentation questions and comments:

Q: What has been the most beneficial aspect of the placement for the Transitions candidate?

A: To have been given a chance for the first time. Some employers can be scared of the word refugee.

Q: How can Transitions support SMEs to assist placementees (in terms of learning)?

A: Transitions has run workshops professional bodies with the aim of assisting candidates' CPD, but it's tricky.

May be an expectation from a placementee in a SME that everything should be more organised. Work to be done in terms of managing expectations.

Challenge for SMEs: fear of refugee status.

Big companies have a responsibility in their supply chain – how are they ensuring the engagement of organisations like Transitions?

If companies (big housebuilders, for example) have really done the work they say they have when being considered for bids, how has there been no move in equality statistics? Everyone is saying they're involved in equality and diversity initiatives but what has actually happened which has made a difference?

- Challenge remains the talent pool – not diverse enough.
- Disagree – they are out there. The companies aren't looking hard enough.

Importance of targets: need to be aspirational and to be able to measure.