

## **How and why was this initiative chosen and how has it been implemented?**

Our initiative (“**Headway**”) was set up to mark the centenary of women being allowed to enter the legal profession , as well as the first policewoman in the Met (1919 - 2019).

We wanted to create a programme that tackles the barriers that still prevent access and progress for BAME women, both inside and outside of those professions.

The target of Headway is to empower BAME schoolgirls from 5 schools in Hackney and Tower Hamlets, focusing on advice for succeeding in their academic and professional careers, and giving them visibility of successful women and people of colour in the City.

## **What difference has this initiative made to your business, your beneficiaries and wider society (qualitative and quantitative)?**

Headway has encouraged us to engage with the barriers to progress that BAME women face. Often, they can be systemic or unconscious bias that go unnoticed without being brought to the forefront of the conversation.

Headway gives our staff opportunity to engage directly with girls who are navigating issues of race and gender and how they vary across generations/social groups. This cannot be achieved without making meaningful connections.

Headway will pave the way for a more diverse and truly meritocratic job market, in which the students recognize the Metropolitan Police, K&L Gates LLP and Cummins as potential employers, allowing us to access the best talent and our businesses to thrive.

Tower Hamlets and Hackney are the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> most deprived areas of the UK, where a disproportionate amount of children are groomed in to criminal activity and gang involvement . The City, may be viewed as not a place for them and there may be an inherent distrust of police. They are the future of London and the programme provides meaningful community engagement to help present a positive opinion of a variety of City employers.

Headway has made a difference to the schoolgirls both academically and professionally, by providing sessions about personal/ business skills, revision skills, speaking out, psychometric testing, knowing your strengths/ weaknesses, and career advice. It is focused on girls who are not achieving their potential in school and we aim to raise their aspirations and make them realise that their options can be opened with hard work and a focus. Secondly, Headway gives the girls physical access to professional spaces and contact with professional women, offering networking sessions with current employees from all three organisations. The girls can visualise one day working in the City themselves and motivate themselves to make that vision a reality.

## **What plans do you have for the future?**

The initiative will run annually in parallel with the school year, working with City community schools. Following on from the success of this first year, we want to recruit more schools, and run more sessions. We routinely obtain feedback for each session with the young people and are due to convene a round table discussion to mark the end of this year's cohort, in which we discuss where the initiative worked well and areas that we can improve. It is critical for schemes like this to flourish, that they need to be dynamic and constantly open to review and are getting feedback from pupils, teachers and key business stakeholder.

We have already secured support from various high-profile names, such as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick and the President of the Law Society. The importance of securing senior people – not only can they give compelling presentations but also raise the aspirations of the girls, reminding them, that they are important, have talents and can make a difference. Our celebration event has had to be delayed due to COVID-19 but we have secured the Mansion House for this and look forward to an event later on this year.